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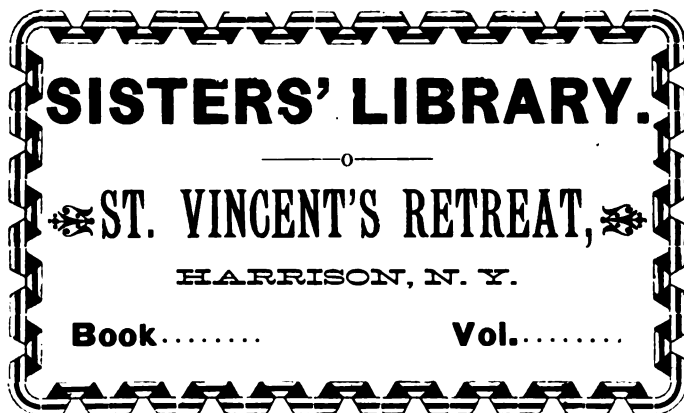


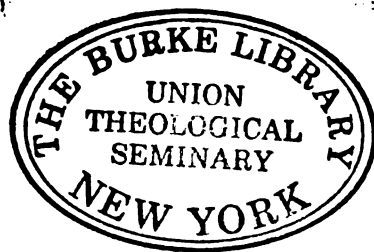
Lives of the Saints



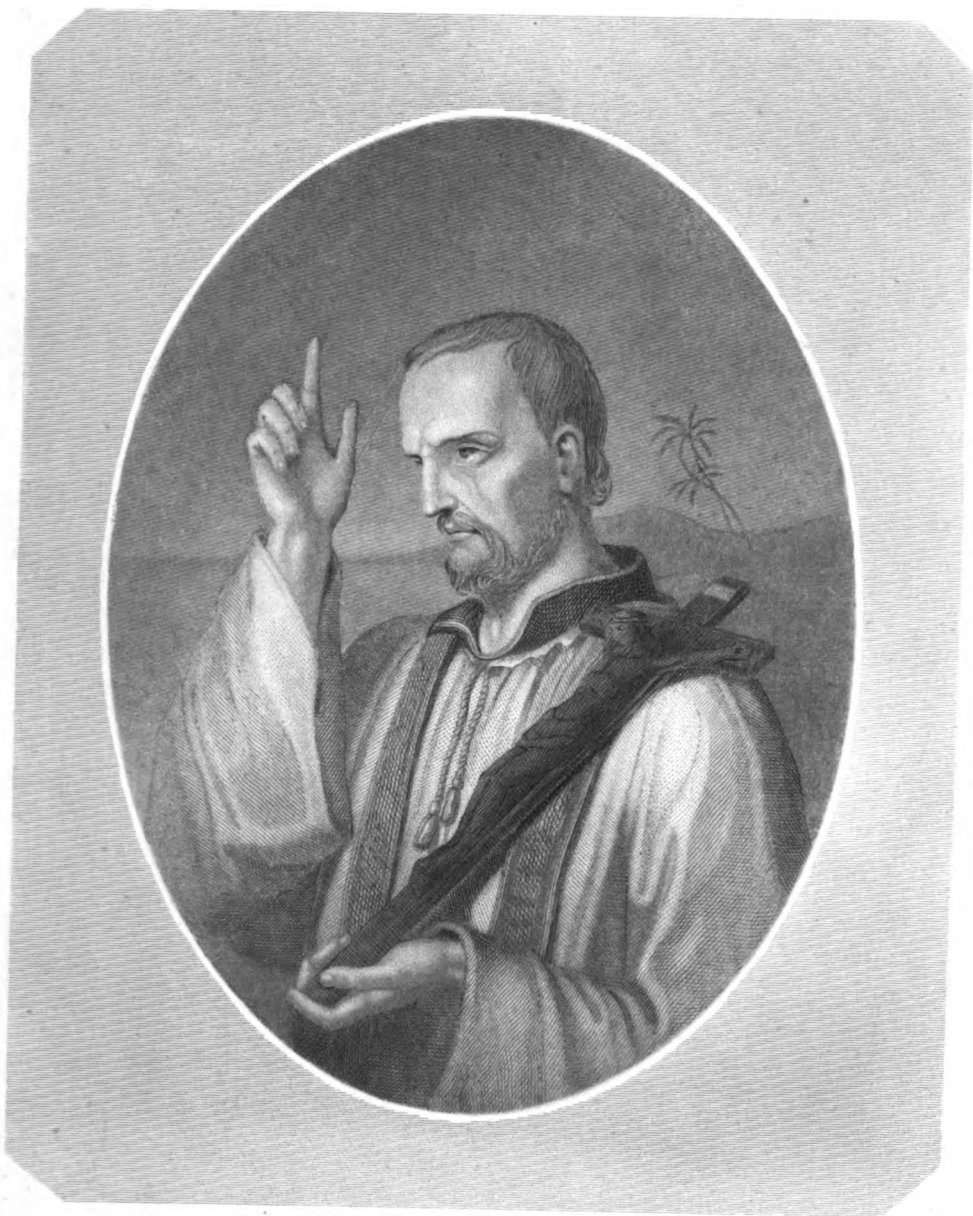
Rev. F. X. Weninger







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St. Francis Xavier.

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St. Francis Xavier

1566-1622

LIVES OF THE SAINTS,

COMPILED FROM AUTHENTIC SOURCES;

WITH A

PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION

ON THE

LIFE OF EACH SAINT,

FOR EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR.

BY

REV. F. X. WENINGER D.D., S.J.

VOL II

PERMISSU SUPERIORUM.

NEW YORK:

P. O'SHEA, PUBLISHER,

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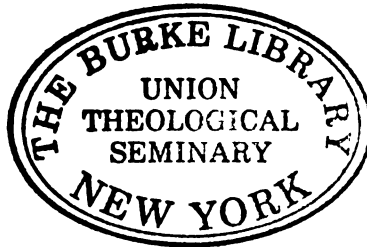
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LIVES OF THE SAINTS.

FIRST DAY OF JULY.

ST. SIMEON SALUS, CONFESSOR.

The Catholic Church, which presents to us during the year so great a number of Saints, of whom some became famed on account of their apostolic zeal in converting the heathen, others for their firmness in faith, others again for their heroic patience under trials, suffering persecutions and adversity, for forsaking all temporal goods, preserving their purity unspotted, or for some other great virtues, has to-day on record, in her book of Martyrs, a Saint who, in a very peculiar manner, attained perfection and gained life everlasting. He acted the fool in order to hide his virtues, make himself despicable to the world, and thus entirely uproot in his heart the inborn pride and ambition of man. The name of this Saint was Simeon. His second name, Salus, which in Syriac means fool, was given to him for the above-mentioned cause. He was born at Edessa in Syria, of rich and zealous Catholic parents, by whose solicitude he was piously educated and instructed in several branches of learning. When nearly twenty years old, he went with one of his most intimate friends to Jerusalem to assist at the celebration of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. On his return he went with the same companion into a monastery where St. Nicon was Abbot and remained there for some time in pious seclusion. Desiring, however, to lead a still stricter life, he left the monastery with the Abbot's permission and went with one of the brotherhood into a desert, where he found a little hut in which but lately a holy hermit had dwelt, and there he and the brother took up their abode. After having lived with great austerity in this solitude more than twenty years, he was inspired to return to the world,

but to conduct himself as if he were demented, that, derided and despised by his fellow-beings, he might overcome all his secret hopes and aspirations, but, at the same time, have an opportunity to give wholesome admonitions to men. Simeon revealed this inspiration to the brother, who vainly endeavored to prevent him from so singular an undertaking: for Simeon—concluding after fervent prayer that the thought had come from God, who calls not all to heaven by one road—bade farewell to his companion and returned to Jerusalem to visit once more the holy places.

Remembering on this occasion how Christ had been derided and despised during His passion, and how He of His own free will had suffered that they should thus scoff and ridicule Him, he became still more strengthened in his resolution. Not to be guided, however, entirely by his own mind, he went from Jerusalem, in the habit of a hermit, to his native place, Edessa, and there informed a deacon, renowned for his sanctity, of the thought that God had given him, and at the same time, of his intention to follow the inspiration. The pious Deacon inquired into all the circumstances and, having prayed for the counsel of the Almighty, praised Simeon's resolution and encouraged him to fight against hell in the manner God had revealed to him. He further advised him to begin his work with trust in the aid of heaven and to continue it with unabating zeal.

Full of confidence, Simeon commenced to represent in all his actions, in his gait, way of conversing, in his look and manner, a person who has lost his reason, without, however, saying or doing any thing that could in the least offend God or give others an opportunity for so doing. Among other things, it is related of him that he found, outside the city upon a dunghill, a dead dog to which he tied a cord that he wore, and thus dragged it through the streets of the city. One may easily fancy how the children, who just left school, scoffed when they saw him. They ran after him, pelted him with mire and stones, pushed him hither and thither, drove him from one street to another, crying, "Look! this monk is crazy." Another time, when he was considerably advanced in years, he sought the society of the children, sat down with them in the streets, built with them houses out of clay, etc. Sometimes he ascended high places and threw nuts and pebbles upon those who passed by. In one word, he feigned to be a most singular being, and was regarded as such by the whole city. Incredible is the derision, the wrong and the disgrace which he suffered on account of it, but this was just what he was seeking, and it may safely be said that few children of the world were so eager in the pursuit of honor and esteem, as Simeon was to be derided and despised. He manifested as much

joy when he saw himself scoffed at and ridiculed as others evince delight at being praised. Notwithstanding all this, however, the life he led was most austere; more than once he passed 40 days without taking any nourishment, except on Sundays and Thursdays. In the miserable hut in which he lived there was nothing but a bundle of leaves which served him as a pillow. The night he passed mostly in prayers and tears; and after making a long visit to the Church in the morning, he went to his work and to his usual practice of feigned folly. He, however, used this as a means to convert many souls; as, on account of his supposed want of reason, every door was open to him. This opportunity he improved either to exhort the people or to admonish them to repentance with the most fearful threats. God blessed the holy endeavors of His servant by aiding him to convert many. This was especially perceptible in the case of fallen women. Simeon begged money, and bringing it to the houses where he knew such persons lived, he made them a present of it; asking in return their friendship. By this means he prevented many from committing sin, and thus slowly brought them to the path of virtue.

The Almighty, who gave to this work of His servant especial grace, would also manifest to future generations that he was well pleased with this way of acting, and that He had, in truth, inspired it; for although it was most singular and unusual, yet it taught men what, with the grace of God, we are able to do in order to conquer evil inclinations. It is known that God wrought many miracles on the sick and the possessed through the merits of this Saint, but the holy man knew so well how to hide the gifts, that he was not esteemed by others on account of them. He sometimes joined the possessed, screamed as they did and acted like them in every way. The devil, that spirit of pride, could not endure the humility of the Saint, and hence left the bodies of the possessed, loudly crying that he had not a greater enemy than the fool of Edessa, who deprived him of so many souls. It is also well attested that Simeon was endowed with the gift of prophecy, and that he foretold at one time a terrible earthquake, and at another, a destroying pestilence. Besides this, the Almighty favored him with visions of angels and with revelations, and at last made known to him the hour of his death. Simeon prepared himself most carefully by partaking of the holy sacraments, and after relating to the above-mentioned pious deacon the high graces with which God had honored him, he begged him not to publish them before his death, and to come in a few days again and visit him. Two days later the deacon came to see him in his little hut, but found him dead. The body was cover-

ed with vine branches and shrubs. Every one came to see the corpse. "He died as he lived, a fool," said the people; but when the deacon told them the life of the deceased and the reason of his feigned insanity, and when, at the same time, God wrought many miracles on the sick who touched his body, the citizens recognized with amazement how great a Saint had dwelt among them under the disguise of a fool. They further saw how divine a wisdom had been concealed under the supposed derangement of mind, and how rare, how heroic a virtue had dwelt under the lowly habit of the hermit. The Church presented him to the world as an unprecedented example of contempt of all human praise, all honor and esteem, as a most perfect conqueror of pride and self-esteem, as a zealous reformer of souls, who, although unrecognized by man while living, was yet great in the sight of the Almighty.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. If you had lived at the time of this holy man, and had observed his actions, tell me, would you not have taken him to be a most singular, perhaps even a wicked man, as others did? and yet you would have been deceived; for, his heart was filled with heavenly wisdom, and his aim and end were not only blameless, but holy. May this teach you how guarded you ought to be in judging the actions of your neighbor, especially if you are not obliged by virtue of your calling to watch over him. Who made you a judge over your neighbor? Who gave you the power to scrutinize his actions? Leave that to the Almighty, who searches the heart and cannot err in His judgment. You, who are not able to look into the hearts of others, and see why they do this or that thing, may err and be deceived. How often have you been obliged to confess that you have been deceived in your estimation of others. Give not easily away to suspicion. If those under you are concerned, endeavor to investigate the matters thoroughly before you judge in regard to them, lay aside all suspicion, and follow the advice of St.

Bernard, who writes: "Be not an impertinent inquirer into the life and actions of others, nor a presuming judge:" that is, ask not out of curiosity how others live, or what their actions have been. Judge not their doings and habits. Do not misconstrue them. You ought to know that you commit great sin by judging rashly in matters of importance, and by misconstruing your neighbor's actions. The surest way to avoid judging our neighbor is frequently to call to mind the words of Christ: "What is it to thee? follow thou me" (John xxi.).

II. The manner in which St. Simeon lived by inspiration of God and with the consent of another holy man, although more to be admired than imitated, contains nevertheless a lesson to the effect that you ought not to seek human praises or empty honors for the little good you are able to do. It is most certainly very absurd to be more zealous in the practice of good, because people will suppose us to be pious and praise us. God promises an eternal reward if we perform good deeds to His honor. Why then should we seek so poor a reward as

human praise? May you be wise, and may the aim of all your actions be high; perform them for the honor of God, and through love of Him; this will obtain graces which the praises of men cannot impart.

As St. Simeon was not disturbed by the derision and ridicule of men in all that he did out of love to God, so ought you never to hesitate, if people deride or scoff at you, because you will not live like others, or because you decline joining in their vain, dangerous, perhaps, even sinful entertainments. Just so should you act, if your good deeds, your

visits to church, your confessions, your listening to sermons, your retired life are misconstrued. Do not mind it, and do not, therefore, depart from the right road, but, on the contrary, show greater zeal to act rightly. Think and say with St. Bernard: "I did not begin for your sake, neither for your sake shall I cease." A time will come when your enemies will have to pay dearly for their scoffing, for he spoke the truth who said: "Judgments are prepared for the scorers" (Prob. xix.).

SECOND DAY OF JULY.

THE VISITATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

The Archangel Gabriel, while announcing to the Blessed Virgin Mary the mystery of the Incarnation, informed her also of the fact that her cousin Elizabeth, who, advanced in years, had long been barren, was about to be blessed with a son. Mary rejoiced greatly at this news, and having given thanks to the Almighty for the priceless grace of the Incarnation of the Eternal Word, she hastened to visit her cousin. This, however, was not done, as some heretics maintain, because she doubted the words of the Angel; for, Elizabeth herself, when already filled with the Holy Ghost, proved the contrary by the words with which she received the Virgin: "Blessed art thou that hast believed." Quite different were the reasons which led Mary to make this visit. I shall here give two of them, taken from the holy Fathers of the Church. The first is from St. Chrysostom, who says: "The Son of God, who came into the world to save mankind, desired, immediately on His entering the world, to prove His love for man, and fulfil the divine office of Redeemer. Hence He moved the heart of His holy mother, in whose virginal womb He was concealed, to visit her cousin Elizabeth, in order that by His presence He might cleanse His fore-runner, John, whom his mother still carried in her bosom, from original sin. He could have done this while absent, but He intended to give us a glorious example of humility, in visiting one who was so infinitely below Him. "The greater," says St. Ambrose, "went to the lesser: Jesus to John."

The second reason is from St. Jerome, who thus writes: "As the Virgin greatly rejoiced at the favor the Almighty had bestowed on her pious cousin Elizabeth, she desired to manifest her joy to the latter, to congratulate her, and to give thanks and praise with her to the divine Mercy which had bestowed upon both of them such great benefits. Besides this it was her intention—which she also carried into effect—to wait on her cousin, who was already in the decline of life. Perhaps also, the great favor which our Lord would bestow upon Elizabeth and the yet unborn John by this visit, was revealed to her. Certain it is that her object was most holy, and that she left us a splendid example of humility and kindness, showing us that we must not only love our neighbors, but also assist and visit them, and, according to circumstances, serve them, regardless of their being much lower than we; as she, the Blessed Virgin, although raised to the highest dignity as the mother of the Lord, hesitated not to visit and assist her cousin, who was so much below her. Actuated by these motives, Mary set out, and went from Nazareth to the city of Hebron, which belongs to the tribe of Juda. According to some authors, this city is 38 or 40 miles from Nazareth, and could be reached only by travelling over a hilly country; hence this journey was very fatiguing for so delicate a maiden as Mary. But she undertook it rejoicingly. The Gospel says: "She went into the hill country with haste." Why with haste? Not only to show her joy and willingness, but also, as Origen writes: "Because the Saviour, concealed in her bosom, desired to cleanse His precursor and to sanctify him;" or, as St. Ambrose says, "because Mary was filled with the Holy Ghost, who is never satisfied with hesitating and tarrying." The love within her, the grace of the Holy Ghost, persuaded Mary to hasten. Mary went hastily over the mountains that she might the sooner return to her beloved solitude. She did not wish to be for a long time out of her house. This additional reason is given by the above cited St. Ambrose, who adds: "Learn from it, maidens, not to wander about in strange houses, nor to remain in the streets, nor to hold long conversations in public places." Having arrived at Hebron and entered her cousin's house, she joyfully greeted Elizabeth, and at the same moment a twofold miracle happened. John, still in his mother's womb, leaped with joy, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost. This leaping is regarded by the Holy Fathers as a more than natural movement of the child, and at the same time as a sign that John, endowed, by especial grace of God, with the light of reason, recognized by revelation, in the virginal womb of Mary, the presence of his Saviour, and, full of joy, worshipped Him. "He recognized the Lord in the mother's womb, and greeted

Him with exultation," says St. Irenæus. It is the opinion of the Holy Fathers that John was at that time cleansed from original sin and filled with the Holy Ghost. For, the Angel who had announced his birth, had, at the same time, foretold that he should be filled with the Holy Ghost while still in his mother's womb. Elizabeth was also filled with the Holy Ghost when she heard Mary's greeting, and recognized by divine revelation that Mary would become the mother of the Incarnate Word. Hence she cried: "Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." With these words Elizabeth proclaimed that Mary was raised by God above all other women, and was more than all others blessed, because she had become the mother of Him who is the source of all graces and blessings. On account of the blessed, and more than blessed fruit of her womb, namely, on account of the only-begotten Son of God, whom she was carrying in her virginal womb, is she blessed, blessed far above all human kind. Thus spoke Elizabeth, full of the Holy Ghost; and it is to be remarked that those who deny this, like the heretics, do not speak filled with the Holy Ghost, with the Spirit of Truth, but prompted by the spirit of falsehood. Wherever the Holy Ghost has spoken out of the mouth of man, He has praised the Virgin. Whoever, therefore, speaks of her disparagingly, does not speak the words of the Holy Ghost, but those of the spirit of error. After Elizabeth had thus praised Mary and exalted her above all women, she said, full of deep surprise: "And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" She esteemed herself not worthy to be visited by the mother of her Lord, as in later years, her son esteemed himself not worthy to loose the latchets of His shoes. Hereupon, she related what had happened to her child, how it had leaped for joy and added: "Blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord." This proves that she knew by revelation what had taken place in the Blessed Virgin and what the Angel had further prophesied. Mary, the Divine Mother, heard all this, but her deep humility allowed her not to elevate herself in the least on account of it. She recognized that all that was done to her was done by the grace of the Almighty, to whom she therefore owed praise and thanks. Hence she sang a hymn of praise which far surpassed all those sung by Moses and his sister, by Anna and Deborah, Ezechias and the three companions of Daniel. In this hymn of praise, she first exalts the Lord for the graces which He had bestowed upon her; secondly, for the favors which He had bestowed on His people before the arrival of Christ; and finally, for the fulfilment of the promises in regard to the Incarnation of His only-begotten Son. The be-

ginning of this hymn is as follows: "My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." Volumes are filled with commentaries on this mysterious hymn of praise, and the Christian Church uses it daily in the office, to thank and praise the Almighty for the immeasurable grace of the Incarnation.

This is what we know from Holy Writ of the history of to-day's festival; and it is only to be added that the visitation of Mary conferred great blessings to the house of Elizabeth. These were without doubt augmented by the prolonged sojourn of Mary, who, as the Gospel relates, remained with her cousin almost three months. If the Almighty richly blessed the house of Obededom, because, as Holy Writ tells us, the Ark of the Covenant was kept there during three months, how great must have been the blessings He bestowed upon the house of Zacharias and Elizabeth, whilst the living Ark of the New Testament, the Blessed Virgin, remained there. St. Ambrose entertains no doubt that the purity and innocence of St. John's life was the result of the grace which Mary's presence poured into his soul. We must also consider how willing Mary is to come to our assistance. No sooner had she become Mother of the Lord, than she desired to show that she had become also the loving mother of mankind. She was not called, she was not entreated to come, but went to Elizabeth, prompted by her own kindness. She proved herself gracious to the sinner as well as to the just. Through her Son she purified St. John, stained with original sin, and bestowed on the pious Elizabeth many precious graces. What confidence towards the Blessed Virgin should this awaken in us, whether we be counted among the sinners or the just!

Finally, let us consider in what manner the Lord, having become man, bestowed His grace. He desired to purify His fore-runner from original sin, and sanctify him even before his birth. This first spiritual gift He imparted through Mary; for, no sooner had she greeted her cousin, than John leaped for joy and was then cleansed from original sin. When, many years afterwards, at Cana in Galilee, He bestowed His first grace on man in temporal need, Mary was the mediator. The sanctification of John was the first miracle He wrought before His birth; the changing of water into wine, the first that He publicly wrought when He walked upon earth. Both were done through the intercession of Mary. The object of this was to teach us, as St. Bernard says, "that it is the will of God that we shall receive everything through Mary," that is, through her intercession. Who, therefore, would hesitate to fly to her confidently for refuge in all temporal and spiritual troubles?

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Besides the instructions you have already received above, consider the kindness of the divine Mother, not only towards Elizabeth, but also towards the unborn John, and renew your confidence in her compassion and mercy. Further, renew your devotion to her, and let her, the loving and mighty Mother, be your guide in all your spiritual and temporal cares. If you are a sinner, she will obtain for you pardon for your iniquities, through true repentance; but if you belong to the righteous, she is ready to ask of God new grace for you, that you may continue on the path leading to life everlasting. "She opens for every one the bosom of mercy," writes St. Bernard, "that all may receive of her plenty; the prisoner, liberty; the sick, health; the sorrowful, comfort; the sinner, pardon; the righteous, grace." You need only take refuge with her, and invoke her with filial confidence. To-day's festival tells you that she, with loving kindness, visited and filled with graces her who had not even invited or asked her to come. What then will she not do for you, if you request and call to her? She has shown herself so kind when she was still upon earth, what will she not do now, being glorified in heaven? "Great was the mercy of Mary when she was still living upon earth," writes St. Bonaventure, "much greater is it now that she reigns in Heaven. She bestows now on mankind countless benefits and greater mercies, because she now recognizes our misery much better." Hence,

make the resolution, always to give her due honor, and to invoke her with filial confidence in every distress. "Call on Mary, in every event of your life," says St. Basil, "for, God has ordained that she shall come to our assistance in all our cares and sorrows."

II. The divine Mother did not visit her cousin Elizabeth through love of idleness, or because she was weary of solitude or work: her end and aim was holy, while she remained, she spoke only of God, the benefits He bestows upon us, and gave due praise to Him. Are the visits you make of a like nature? Examine your conscience carefully, and in future be very solicitous that the cause, end and aim of your visits are not vain or sinful, that you make not a habit of them, or neglect the duties of your station in life by prolonging them without sufficient cause. Be careful what you say or do while they last; for, you may be sure that you may commit great sin and render yourself liable to everlasting punishment, by visits during which you make use of indecent language, or slander your neighbors, or occupy yourself in dangerous games, in which people sometimes seek amusement. And even though nothing were lost but the priceless time, this alone should be enough to prevent you from unnecessary visits. St. Bonaventure says rightly: "No loss is greater than that of time; for, it was given to us by Divine Goodness to work out our salvation, and, once lost, it can never be recalled."

THIRD DAY OF JULY.

ST. OTHO, BISHOP OF BAMBERG.

St. Otho, who is commemorated in the Roman Martyrology, on the second day of July, was a descendant of a noble family of Suabia. His parents, Otho and Adelheid, educated him most piously, and the Almighty, who chose him to convert the heathens of Pomerania and to save many souls, endowed him for this purpose with unusual talents. His eminent learning, which was attained by unwearied application, his varied abilities, but above all, his virtue and piety, won him the esteem of high and low. The Emperor, Henry IV., chose him as chaplain to his sister, Judith, on her marriage with Boleslas III., Duke of Poland. In consequence of this, he went to that country and learned its language. After the death of Judith he returned to the imperial court, and became at first private secretary of the Emperor, and later was raised to the dignity of Chancellor.

After some years, when the See of Bamberg became vacant by the death of Rupert, Henry nominated him bishop, and conferred upon him the Episcopal ring and crosier. Although the humble Otho, upon bended knees, begged the emperor to spare him the burden of this great dignity, his request was not complied with, and the emperor had him accompanied to Bamberg, with all due honors, by the deputies of that city. A great part of the inhabitants came to meet him at Ammerbach, and when he was in sight of the city, he dismounted from his horse, and although it was winter and the ground covered with snow, he walked barefoot into the city, and went first into the Cathedral to commend himself to his God. After this, he reported to the Pope all that had taken place, and somewhat later, called by the Pope, he went to Rome, and laying ring and crosier at the feet of the Pontiff, he begged to be released from his dignity. But the Holy Father refused to consent, consecrated him bishop on the Festival of Pentecost, and sent him back to Bamberg. On his arrival, the Saint labored with all zeal to further the honor of God and the spiritual well-being of his flock. To relate the means by which he succeeded in this would require too much space. Of the great labor he performed we will only mention that, besides many churches, he erected twenty convents in different places, endowing all of them richly. Among these deserves especially to be mentioned the Monastery on what was called Mount Michael, at Bamberg, to which he was much attached,

and in which he desired to live as a religious. At the base of this mountain he built a chapel and a hospital, in honor of St. Ægidius. The Cathedral, of which the greater part was laid in ashes by a conflagration, he restored to more than its former grandeur. It was remarkable that, while the holy bishop erected and endowed so many magnificent buildings, the revenues of the See were not only not lessened, but, on the contrary, augmented, as he redeemed many castles and cities of which his See had been deprived. Every one had to acknowledge that, the more the holy man spent for the honor of God or the comfort of the poor, the more he miraculously received from heaven. He kept the names of the poor in alphabetical order, and cared for them like a loving father. During a famine, he emptied his granaries and cellars for them, and left no means untried to assist the suffering. As many became sick at the same time, he went, not only during the day, but also at night, from house to house, visited the sick, administered the holy sacraments to them, and even attended to their burial. He was seen carrying the dead, as Tobias had done, upon his shoulders to the grave. He very frequently sent the food, which was placed upon his table, to the needy, and partook only of water and bread, but never taking enough to satisfy himself. One day, they placed on his table a most costly fish; but Otho said: "Far be it from me to consume in one day so much money. Go, take this fish to a poor or sick man; I, who am yet strong, can content myself with a piece of bread." These and other virtues made the name of the holy bishop known and venerated everywhere. Boleslas, Duke of Poland, who had known him when he was chaplain to the Duchess Judith, sent a delegation to him with a letter requesting him to come to Pomerania, and convert to the Christian faith the heathen nation which he had subdued. The holy bishop rejoiced to have so large a field of labor for the honor of the Almighty and the salvation of souls, hoping at the same time, that an opportunity might be offered to him to shed his blood for Christ's sake. He therefore, with the permission of the Pope, left his diocese, and proceeded with some priests to Pomerania. The labors he there performed, and the cares, the sufferings, the persecutions he endured among this barbarous and idolatrous people, are known only to Him from whom nothing is hidden. The inhabitants of several places opposed him most violently, and were incited by their idolatrous priests to kill him and his companions. But God most miraculously protected him, and so evidently blessed his patience and perseverance, that, at last, the whole of Pomerania was, by his endeavors, subjected to the sweet yoke of Christ. Having accomplished

this, he erected many churches, and placed them in charge of fervent priests; he consecrated Adalbert, bishop of the country, and left nothing undone that a zealous apostle is able to do, to disseminate the true faith, and to uproot idolatry; whence he rightly received the name of the Apostle of Pomerania. After having thus, by the assistance of the Most High, brought many thousands of souls to the knowledge of the True God, and after having also taken care of their future spiritual welfare, he returned to his bishopric. Being informed, however, after some time, that several cities of Pomerania had forsaken the true faith, he undertook a second journey, and succeeded in reconciling the apostates with God and the Church. Lothair, the Emperor, recalled him, after some time, to his See, where he arrived on the evening before the Festival of St. Thomas, and was received with great rejoicings.

Feeling that the time of his departure from this world was drawing near, he redoubled his zeal in regard to the spiritual welfare of his flock, until, to the inexpressible sorrow of all under him, he became dangerously ill. He comforted them with all the strength which his trust in God imparted to him, and prepared himself, by most devoutly receiving the holy Sacraments, for a happy death. When first he felt ill, he called the Abbot of the Monastery of Mount Michael to him, and acquainted him with the fact that he had long since desired to resign his dignity as bishop and become a religious, and that now the moment had arrived in which he would request the Abbot to bestow on him the habit, and receive him among his subjects. The Abbot did not refuse, but neither bestowed the habit upon him, nor allowed him to reside in the Monastery. When Otho repeated his request, the Abbot asked him whether he had promised obedience to him when he had been received among the religious? The Saint replied that he had. "Then," said the Abbot, "I command you to remain in the episcopal See, to the comfort of the poor, and the salvation of souls, until your end." The bishop acquiesced after these words, and continued to discharge his functions with fervent zeal during the remainder of his life. He died praising the Lord; having requested that the matins of the office should be sung by several of the monks in his presence, he raised his hands and eyes to heaven and expired. His death occurred in the year 1189, the seventieth of his life, and the thirty-seventh from his consecration as bishop. His holy body was buried, according to his desire, on Mount Michael, in the Church which he himself had built; and God honored the tomb of His servant with many miracles, wrought upon the blind, the deaf and the dangerously sick, and even on some who were

already dead. Many miracles are also related which the Saint performed in Pomerania, by means of which many heathens were moved to embrace the Christian faith.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Take notice of the fact, that the more St. Otho spent for the poor and the honor of God, the more he miraculously received from the Almighty. God keeps the promise He made when He said: "Give, and it shall be given to you; good measure, pressed down and shaken together, and running over shall they give into your bosom." Why then do you fear to lose when you contribute something for the building or adorning of a church, or for the comfort of the poor, or for some other charitable purpose? Do you not then believe your God rather than Satan, who endeavors to convince you of the contrary? Manifest your faith by your works. Especially assist the poor according to your means, and be assured that God commands you to give alms. The omission of alms-deeds may cause your eternal misery, as we must conclude from the sentence which the Divine Judge will one day pronounce over the wicked. You have also in Holy Writ the example of the rich man. Why was he damned? "Not because he imposed upon others," says St. Augustine, "nor for his stealing or oppression of orphans and widows; but because he had no compassion for the poor;" because he omitted to give alms.

II. No sooner did St. Otho perceive that his disease was dangerous, than he prepared himself for death by receiving the Sacraments. What can be the reason that some people put off so long the reception of the holy sacraments when they are sick? Do they imagine

that they will die sooner, or that they will become worse when the sacraments are administered to them? The very contrary of this is daily seen. May you not be among the number of these silly and presuming people. If you should become sick, and are told or feel that there is danger, do not put off confession and receiving the Holy Communion. Solicitous Christians demand of their physician, or of those about them, to be informed whether they are in danger, and when informed, they delay not to prepare themselves for the holy sacraments. Imitate these and you will bear your sufferings with more patience and peace of mind, and your merit will be greater. Should God restore your health, you will not be sorry that you have done your duty, and should He call you from this world, you will depart much more comforted and much happier than if you had delayed. Of course, Satan is always ready to persuade both sick and well that there is plenty of time. He endeavors, by this delay, to keep man fearless, and, so to say, reassured in his iniquities in order that he may die without receiving the sacraments, or that he may receive them without due preparation to his own condemnation, and thus be lost to all eternity. "Satan," writes St. Augustine, "gives man assurance in order to ruin him. Those who have been deceived by the vain hope of recovery are innumerable, and the vast number of men who, thus assured, have been suddenly taken away ought to be a warning to us."

FOURTH DAY OF JULY.

ST. ULRIC, BISHOP OF AUGSBURG.

St. Ulric, renowned for his virtues and the miracles he wrought, was born towards the close of the ninth century. His parents were Kupald, Count of Kueburg, and Thielburga, daughter of Burkard, Duke of Suabia. When he was only seven years old, his education was entrusted to the religious of the Abbey of St. Gall, where he progressed in virtue and learning much more than could be expected at his tender age. When he became older, he entertained the fervent desire to enter the religious state, and in order to learn the will of the Almighty, he passed some time in prayer and penance. He also asked the advice of Wigerade, a virgin renowned for her holiness, who, after having, by a three days' prayer, called on God for light, said to Ulric that he was not destined by heaven to be a monk, but to become a secular priest. Hence he left the monastery and returned to his parents, who sent him to Augsburg to the virtuous bishop Adalberon, who soon recognizing the virtues and talents that were in Ulric, employed him in all the manifold affairs of his sacred functions, and ordained him priest. After some years, with the permission of the bishop, he made a pilgrimage to Rome, during which time Adalberon died. The Pope desired to nominate Ulric to the vacant See; but when the latter heard of it, he was frightened and secretly left. The Holy Father, being informed of this, said: "If Ulric is not pleased to take the See of Augsburg, while it is in a peaceful condition, he will be forced to accept it when it will be in a state of great disturbance and anarchy." This really happened; for, after the death of Hiltin, who had succeeded Adalberon, Ulric was obliged to yield to the unanimous voice of the clergy and laity. It was a most sad period, for the enemy had devastated the land with fire and sword, the churches were either reduced to ashes or robbed of all their valuables, and the inhabitants were greatly suffering from poverty. The holy bishop was unwearied in his endeavors to restore the churches, to assist the poor and afflicted, and, when he had nothing else to give, he brought consolation and hope to them. For fifty years he governed the See of Augsburg, and words fail to describe the work he performed, the suffering he endured during this time for the glory of the Almighty and the temporal and spiritual welfare of his flock.

The Roman Martyrology praises him especially for these

virtues: temperance, liberality, and vigilance. His temperance in eating, drinking and sleeping was so great that more could not have been required of one belonging to an austere religious order. He never partook of meat, although he had it served to strangers and to the poor. In short, he was so frugal that his whole life may be called one continued fast. His bed was straw, and his sleep but a short rest, as he passed the greater portion of the night in devout exercises. He wore no linen, but a garment of wool, and beneath it a rough hair-cloth. His liberality to the poor could not be surpassed; some of them ate daily at his own table. He sometimes waited on them, sometimes shared the meal with them, during which a devout book was read aloud. All that remained of his revenues after he had restored the Church, was devoted to the needy, for whom he procured corn, clothing and houses. He spent nothing to ornament or furnish his own dwelling, in order to be the better able to assist the poor. The best evidence of this is that he ate off wooden dishes, one of which is still shown. Before his death he had all that the house contained brought to him and divided it among the poor. His vigilance over his fold was indefatigable and truly apostolic. He preached, administered the Sacraments, visited the sick, comforted the dying, and yearly visited every parish in his whole diocese on foot, accompanied by only one chaplain. He several times assembled the clergy and consulted with them about abolishing abuses, or about some plan that he had devised for the benefit of the people. In a word, he evinced a father's solicitude, not only for the spiritual, but also for the temporal prosperity of those entrusted to his care, and regarded neither care nor danger when their welfare was concerned. In 955, the Hungarians pillaged Bavaria, and coming to Augsburg, besieged the city. Ulric exhorted the men to be brave, and the women, children and sick to pray. The whole night he was with them in the church, strengthening the soldiers with the blessed Sacrament. When the morning broke, he mounted a horse, shielded, not in armor, but in a stole, and accompanied the soldiers out of the city to fight against the barbarians. During this time he received from an angel, who visibly appeared to him, a small cross, which he kept in his hand, not fearing the darts or sword-strokes of the enemy; and the sight of which inflamed the courage of his people, who, before long, won a most brilliant victory over the enemy. All this took place on the feast of St. Lawrence, and the happy result was, under God, ascribed justly to the bishop, as the emperor Otho himself declared when he came to assist the distressed people.

Besides the three above mentioned virtues which the Saint

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possessed, his life was a shining example of angelic purity, which he kept free from every stain. His devotion to God and the Saints was not less exemplary ; he always assisted in choir at the office of the priests. He erected, as well in the city as out of it, many churches, and rebuilt those which had been burned or injured by the enemy. Among the latter was the church of St. Afra, who was greatly honored by the holy bishop. She appeared to him several times, informed him where her holy body was concealed, and foretold to him several events, among which was the happy result of the above-mentioned battle. On account of these and many other admirable qualities, the people called him only the holy bishop, while God proclaimed the sanctity of His servant by many miracles which were known over the whole Christian world. The oil, which he had consecrated on holy Thursday, healed many sick, and restored the limbs of the lame. He was seen to walk over the river without even wetting his feet. Once, at Easter, when, in presence of a large multitude of people, he celebrated High Mass, a hand, coming from heaven, was seen, which, jointly with Ulric's hand, blessed the chalice before the consecration.

Having thus faithfully labored for many years in the service of the Most High, the Saint felt that his end was approaching and prepared himself for his Master's call. On the festival of St. John, he said Holy Mass for the last time, after which he was brought home, and occupied the remainder of his life in devotional exercises. He humbly requested all those around him to pardon any offence of which he might have been guilty towards them, and gave them many wholesome instructions. When his end was near, he had ashes strewn on the floor in the form of a cross, and sprinkled with holy water ; then, requesting to be laid on them, he remained in prayer until, at the dawn of day, while he was chanting the Litany, death closed his eyes in the eighty-third year of his life, A. D. 973.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. St. Ulric endeavored to learn his vocation by prayer, penance, and by the advice of others. In this the Saint acted very wisely, and ought to be imitated by all who wish to know the will of God. More depends upon it than is generally believed. They do very wrong who blindly choose their path</p>	<p>through life without seriously reflecting if God has assigned them to it, or if they may serve heaven by it and gain salvation. By neglecting to do this, many have gone to eternal ruin. Not every vocation suits everybody, although considered in general, salvation may be gained in every honest station of life. Many a one is con-</p>
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demned in the clerical state, who, in the secular would have saved his soul ; while many lose salvation in the world, who, in religion would have gained life everlasting. If we desire to know our vocation, we must earnestly pray for light, and further maturely consider our intentions and consult with others. Should you, dear reader, still have to choose your vocation in life, ponder well my words and take the advice of an intelligent confessor. If you have already chosen and entered a certain state, and feel that you have erred in so doing, repent of your mistake and endeavor to atone for it, by leading a strictly Christian life, and by making the most of every opportunity offered you to work out your salvation.

II. St. Ulric passed the greater part of the night in prayer, and during the day he assisted at all the offices of the church. Have you ever passed, I will not say the greater, but only a small part of the night in prayer? Ah! you are too indolent to pray even in the day. In the day-time, you appear but seldom at Holy Mass, and other devotional exercises ; what then can be expected from you at night? You say that sleep and household cares prevent you ; and yet I know

that you often amuse yourself in idle gossip, gambling to a late hour. I know that during the day you spend many an hour in frivolous visits or in other similar ways. Sleep and household duties do not prevent this. Why do you then make them a pretext when it concerns praying and assisting at the holy sacrifice of the Mass? You evidently do not comprehend the necessity of prayer. At least do not neglect it in the morning and evening. Give to God and to your soul, if possible, half an hour, to assist at holy Mass, and during the day turn your thoughts sometimes towards heaven by pious ejaculations. On Sundays and holy-days, assist more assiduously at the public devotions, and give more time than on other days to prayers and devout reading. "It is impossible," writes St. Chrysostom, "to lead a virtuous life when we do not care to pray. We ought to pray without ceasing ; but, as other affairs prevent this, we ought to interrupt our occupations by short prayers. We should, at least, before commencing our day's work, raise our heart and soul in prayer to heaven. A soldier does not enter the battle-field without weapons, and a Christian should not begin anything without prayer."

THE FIFTH DAY OF JULY.

ST. GODOLIVA.

An uncommon example of Christian patience is presented to us by the Church to-day in St. Godoliva, whose life ought to be particularly considered by all women who fall to the lot of wicked men. She was a native of France, and the daughter of rich

and noble parents who neglected nothing to give her an education in accordance with her station in life. She united with most exquisite beauty, great virtue and piety, and hence was early sought in marriage by many young men of the nobility. Among these, a certain Bertulph of the Netherlands, who seemed her equal in rank, gained her parent's consent, and Godoliva submitted to their will. Having received a dower according to her station in life, she went, accompanied by some of her relatives, to the Netherlands, where her marriage was to take place. But how surprising an evidence of the inconstancy of human love! Scarcely had the noble bride arrived under the roof of her future husband, when she perceived that Bertulph's love for her was changed into hatred and aversion, as he hardly deigned to look at her. His wicked mother, if not the first, was not the last cause of this unexpected change: as she reproached her son for having chosen a foreigner for his wife, as if, in his own country, her equal in beauty and virtue could not be found. She found fault with everything the innocent Godoliva said or did, and thus inflamed the fire of contention to such a degree that later only the blood of the pious Godoliva could quench it. The poor maiden's sadness may easily be conceived; but she hoped that these dark clouds would pass away. Meanwhile the arrangements for the wedding were completed, and it accordingly took place. Bertulph, however, was present only during the ceremony, as he was unable to hide his aversion for his bride. He appointed a separate dwelling for her, and remained with his parents, declaring that he would not hear or see anything of her, so great was the hatred he bore her. The deeply grieved Godoliva, seeing herself thus forsaken by men, sought for refuge with God. Day and night, she was on her knees imploring the Almighty to change Bertulph's heart, and fill it with Christian love. Although God did not answer her prayers in the manner she desired, He gave her grace to submit entirely to His divine will, and to carry her cross with heroic patience. Bertulph, in order to torment her still more, and slowly to kill her, gave her a servant whom he had commanded to furnish for her sustenance daily only a piece of bread and some water. The godless servant not only obeyed the cruel order, but treated Godoliva with as much rudeness as if she had been his slave instead of his mistress. Godoliva's Christian virtue bore all this with indescribable patience. She never showed the least sign of indignation; and no complaint of Bertulph's inhuman command, nor the harsh treatment she received from the servant, ever passed her lips. She only uttered the praises of God, and thanked Him for giving her the opportunity to suffer. When the profligate mother of

Bertulph saw that neither hunger nor grief would, as she had hoped, end Godoliva's life, she persuaded her son to get rid of her in some other way, as starvation was too slow. Bertulph would have been easily persuaded to follow this wicked advice had not fear of Godoliva's noble parents and relatives deterred him at least for some time. The innocent handmaid of the Lord perceived meanwhile, by the daily increasing torments, that she had nothing to expect but a violent death, and therefore sought for an opportunity to escape. God gave her this opportunity, and she, embracing it, fled, and after many hardships returned to her parents. The latter were inexpressibly grieved when she told them her sufferings, and being greatly indignant at the tyranny she had endured, they requested Baldwin, Count of Flanders, and also the bishop of Nimwegen, as their friend, to reproach Bertulph, seriously, with his impious conduct and command him, at the same time, to receive his wife again and in future to treat her in a different manner. Both took a deep interest in the matter, and they supposed that their expostulation had impressed Bertulph, as he professed to them and to the parents of Godoliva, deep regret at his tyranny and promised on oath not only to cease from maltreating her, but to live with her in love and harmony. On this promise, she was commanded by her parents to return with him to his home, which she did. No sooner, however, had she arrived there than she was more ill-treated than before. All her former miseries were redoubled, and the hatred of Bertulph, now more deeply rooted, made itself more clearly manifest. Nothing was to be expected but the execution of the long nourished murderous design. The innocent Godoliva was ready for her last hour; for she was determined not to leave her husband again even if it should cost her life. Every day she prepared herself to die, commending her soul to the mercy of her Creator. To some women, who came to comfort her in her misery, she said, with great cheerfulness; "You believe that I am an object of pity; but I, although encompassed by sorrow, hope one day to be exalted and recompensed above all women in Flanders." Thus she consoled herself with the contemplation of her reward in the other world.

Into this she was soon to enter: for Bertulph was determined to do the worst. He hired two assassins to murder Godoliva. Not to be suspected of the bloody deed, he undertook a journey to Brussels, went to Godoliva, and pretending to acknowledge and repent of his faults, he informed her that he was obliged to set out for Brussels, but that, on his return, he would show greater love for her than she had ever expected from him. Upon this the false spouse took leave, with the assurance that he

would return in a few days. He really went away, believing that no one would suppose him to be the instigator of the murder which would take place during his absence. Godoliva had no faith in his promises; his many other false demonstrations had made her suspicious. She had no doubt that her end was near, and most earnestly prepared herself for death. She was not deceived in her expectation. Soon after Bertulph's departure, the two assassins entered Godoliva's chamber at night, dragged her out of bed, put a rope around her neck, and strangled her in a most barbarous manner. After this, they placed the dead body again in the bed and covered it, thinking that no one would discover how Godoliva had come by her death. When she was found on the following day, every one believed that grief had put an end to her life. God, however, so ordered, that Bertulph, in the course of time, confessed his crime, and, to do penance, retired into a cloister. How precious Godoliva's death was in the sight of the Lord, was shown by the many miracles which were wrought at her tomb. History does not tell what became of the wicked mother of Bertulph, but she doubtless went to eternal destruction, if she repented not, since, by destroying the harmony between her son and his wife, she had been the cause of so much unhappiness. And the same lot will befall all those, who by slander, tale-bearing, or other wicked means, produce the same disunion.

Woe to such mischief-makers! How great will be their responsibility before the Judgment-seat of God! The Lord, according to Holy Writ, has the greatest detestation for those who stir up dissensions among brothers, and still more for those who disturb the peace of husband and wife; because the quarrels of the latter are generally of longer duration, and their consequences are more disastrous.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. It is not seldom the case that married people live unhappily together, and one abuses and even curses the other. This is often a punishment for sin they committed before they were united in wedlock; for it is generally the case that the greater their sinful love before they were united, the greater is their hatred and aversion to each other afterwards. St. Raphael said to young Tobias that the devil has</p>	<p>power over those that enter the state of matrimony sinfully. (Tob. vi.) If the devil has power over such people, it is surely not to be wondered at, that, as he tempted them to unchastity before, he should incite them to contention and hatred afterwards. If there are married couples whose conscience tells them that they have sinned before they were united, they ought to do penance and endeavor to live</p>
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peaceably. Others who have not to reproach themselves with such sin, ought to be careful to find the cause of their contention and entirely uproot it. The Almighty has, according to the words of the Wise Man, great pleasure in those married people who agree well together. (Eccl. xxv.) This harmony is of greater benefit to their souls and bodies than they imagine: for it brings the blessing of heaven upon them, as St. Chrysostom writes, and prevents many great sins which follow strife and contention. It is generally the case that, when love and harmony leave husband and wife, they torment each other in this world like evil spirits, and at last will enter where they are ceaselessly tormented by the devils. Hence St. Paul commanded the men to love their wives: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church" (Eph. v.). The same is said to the women. The love of Christ for his Church, is a true and constant love: the love of the Church for Christ is also constant. In like manner should be the love of husband and wife.

II. If one spouse has to suffer much from the other, let him, or her read how St. Godoliva conducted her-

self, and learn from her how to bear trials and suffering. The same should be done by a servant who is under a wicked or hard-hearted master. All who have to bear the cross should learn from St. Godoliva where to seek grace and strength, that their trials may profit them. What benefit would St. Godoliva have drawn from her suffering, if she had murmured against God and her husband, if she had abused the wicked man, or called down upon him the vengeance of heaven? Would this have made her afflictions easier to bear? Most certainly not. On the contrary, it would have added to her burden. Not only would she have had to endure it without the hope of a future reward in heaven, but she would have had to expect deserved punishment. And what benefit does it bring you, if you carry your cross with murmuring and impatience? It must be carried nevertheless. Hence, carry it after the example of Godoliva, nay, of Christ Himself, with patience. Woe to them who bear not their cross as Christ bore His! They are doubly miserable; for, they torment themselves in this world, and then are dragged away into eternal torments. Thus writes St. Bernard.

SIXTH DAY OF JULY.

ST. GOAR, PRIEST AND HERMIT.

The holy priest and hermit Goar was born in Aquitain and was the descendant of an illustrious family. His tender childhood already bore marks of the great sanctity to which he attained in after life. He was never playful like other children, but always retiring and quiet in all his ways, and manifested early a great love of purity and a horror of all sin. No indelicate word

was ever heard from his lips, and he could not endure it in others. Aided by fervent prayers, many penances, and frequent partaking of the holy communion, he preserved his purity unstained. After growing up and being instructed in the requisite knowledge, he was ordained Priest. His holy conduct and zealous preaching brought many heathens to the knowledge of the true God, many sinners to repentance, and strengthened many pious people to persevere in the right way. As this subjected him to great praise, and brought him so many visits that he could not give as much time as he desired to prayers, he resolved to leave his home, and in solitude to serve the Lord with all the powers of his soul. He delayed not to carry his resolution into effect, secretly left his home, and having arrived in the territory of Triers, he, with the permission of the bishop, built a little church at Upper-Wessel, and there he daily said Mass. In this solitude he lived a holy life, practising all the virtues of his station. To the heathens, who were still in those parts, he preached the Gospel with great success, exhorted others to repentance, to avoid sin, and to do good works. God blessed the holy endeavors of His servant with many remarkable conversions and miracles, the fame of which soon spread about, drawing many strangers to the dwelling of the Saint. The pious priest availed himself of this opportunity to further their spiritual welfare. He received all most kindly, and cheerfully extended hospitality to them in order to prevent them by devout discourses from sin and lead them to God. These pious endeavors were rewarded with many happy results. A large number of people were converted. But, notwithstanding this, the Almighty permitted the holy man to be accused by some wicked persons of hypocrisy, pride and other vices. Among these were two servants of the bishop of Triers, who, after having visited St. Goar and seen his way of living, said unhesitatingly to the bishop that Goar was a hypocrite, who assumed holiness only to deceive the people, that he led not the life of a hermit, but was intemperate and made merry with worldly people.

The miracles wrought by him, they said, were nothing but a deception of Satan. The bishop commanded the hypocrite to be brought before him, that he might call him to account and punish him accordingly. The servants went to the Saint and informed him of the bishop's command. Goar received them kindly, entertained them hospitably, and promised to return with them on the following day. Day-break had hardly lit up the cross of his little church, when the holy man, according to custom, said Mass, having ordered breakfast for the two servants of the bishop and for a stranger who had just arrived. The servants

would not touch the food, and reproached the Saint, that he, already so early in the morning, thought of eating and drinking. But, notwithstanding this, they requested him to give them some food for their journey. The holy man told them that Christianity enjoined hospitality, and, having given them as much food as they desired for the journey, he went away with them. Upon the way, he occupied himself in singing Psalms. At midday, the servants were faint from hunger and thirst, and unable to proceed on their journey, they wished to refresh themselves with the food which the holy man had given them, and they looked about for some water wherewith to quench their thirst. But they found neither food nor water: God had taken from them what they had before refused to partake of, probably to punish them for the wickedness with which they had judged the holy priest. They acknowledged their fault, and begged the Saint's pardon, who after a short prayer procured them, by a miracle, food and drink. Recognizing the holiness of him whom they had denounced as a hypocrite and a glutton, they changed their opinion of him, and arriving at the bishop's palace, told what had occurred and added much in the Saint's praise. The bishop, however, was not so willing to alter the opinion he had already formed, but accused him, in the presence of a great many priests, of several vices, particularly of hypocrisy and intemperance.

The Saint defended his innocence with great sweetness and tranquillity, but found no willing ear in the bishop. Meanwhile an illegitimate child was brought in, which had just been found at the place where such children were deposited. The bishop said to the assemblage: "We shall now see if this hermit is a true servant of God, or only a deceiver." He then commanded the accused to reveal the name of the parents of the child, or induce the latter to name them. The holy man refused as long as possible to comply with this request, and gave reasons which ought to have induced the bishop to let the matter rest; but, as he insisted upon it, the Saint adjured the child in the name of the Holy Trinity, to reveal the names of its parents. The child, which was only three days old, immediately opened its mouth, and said, quite distinctly; "Rusticus is my father, and Flavia, my mother." The bishop was thunderstruck at hearing his own name, and falling at the feet of St. Goar, begged him to forgive the rash judgment he had formed of him. The holy man was deeply grieved that this crime was thus made public, and took upon himself to make reparation for it by a penance of seven years.

This remarkable event soon spread abroad, and when it had

come to the ears of King Siegbert, the Saint was called to inform the King of the whole proceedings. The holy man, however, refused to appear. The King insisted, saying that he was already acquainted with the principal facts, and having related them, desired to know if all had happened in that manner. The Saint replied: "As your majesty has related all, it would be superfluous to add anything." This answer pleased the King greatly, who therefore desired to bestow on St. Goar the See of Triers. The Saint earnestly refused, but as the King, the nobility, and the people urged him to accept it, he requested to have a few days, to take counsel with God. When this had been granted, he returned to his dwelling, and prayed, with tearful eyes, that God would avert what seemed to be in store for him.

God heard his prayer, and sent him a dangerous fever, which kept him for seven years in his cell, not allowing him to set foot out of doors. These seven years of suffering he offered according to his promise to God, for the bishop, who then also led a penitential life. Hardly had the Saint recovered from his illness, when the King again requested him to accept the government of the See. But the Saint answered that they would not be able to remove him out of his cell, until they carried away his body in a coffin. These words proved true, for he was attacked by another disease which lasted four years, and which only terminated at his death, in the year of our Lord 575.

The many miracles wrought on the tomb of the Saint showed how much the Almighty was pleased with His servant, while they at the same time made the place, where his holy relics rested, so famous, that a considerable town grew out of it which still at this day bears the name of "St. Goar."

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. Read once more the answer which St. Goar gave to the King who desired to know what had happened. Read it, and learn how prudently we ought to speak of others. To inform those who have authority to prevent or punish evil, or who have the power to bring the perpetrators to the knowledge of their vices, is permitted, if it is done with a good intention. Not to inform these is sometimes a mortal sin. But when the evil is still unknown, and I inform those whom it</p>	<p>does not concern and who have not the power to prevent, punish, or in any manner do what may redress the mischief done, then my telling this evil is nothing but slander; hence a sin, and often a mortal one. If the crimes are public, then to speak of them to others is not slander, but is often neither kind nor charitable. This ought to be well considered by those who think that it is not slander, and hence no sin, when they reveal to others the faults or crimes of their</p>
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neighbors, which may be true, but still are unknown. Examine your conscience to learn if you are guilty of this, and in future be more careful.

II. St. Goar performed a seven years' penance for the sins of others, and offered for the expiation of them his own sufferings. What penance do you perform for your own sins? You have the best opportunity to do penance when you are sick, or have other trials. Regard it as punishment for your iniquities, as a divine admonition. Repent of your sins and confess them, and bear the pains of your sickness or your trials with patience, in the spirit of penance, and offer all to God as an atonement for your sins, at the same time making the

resolution, not to offend the Almighty again. If you do this, you will perform a noble penance which will purify you from all stains of sin. The Venerable Bede writes: "Sickness, endured with patience, serves instead of purgatory to cleanse men from their sins." But if you are not converted in your sickness, if you suffer murmuringly and impatiently, what will then happen to you? St. Gregory the Great, answers this question in the following words: "Present suffering, when it converts men, atones for past sin: but not producing this effect, it will be the beginning of future punishment. Hence, let us be careful not to pass from temporal into eternal pain."

SEVENTH DAY OF JULY.

ST. WILLIBALD, BISHOP OF EICHSTADT.

St. Willibald, first bishop of Eichstadt, was born in England, about the year 700. His father was the holy king, St. Richard, and his mother, Bonna, or Wunna, a sister of St. Boniface, the great Apostle of Germany; his brother, St. Wunibald, Abbot of Heidenheim, and his sister, the celebrated holy Abbess Walburgis. When hardly three years old, Willibald became so dangerously ill that the physicians despaired of his recovery. His pious parents sought help in prayer, and promised to consecrate their beloved child entirely to the service of the Most High, if it should be restored to health. God heard the prayer, and the devout parents fulfilled their promise. Having reached his sixth year, he was given in charge of Egbald, Abbot of the monastery of Waltheim, under whose direction he was educated not only in virtue and piety, but also in the liberal arts and sciences. At twenty years of age, he conceived, after the custom of pious people at that period, a fervent desire to visit the Holy Land, and

all those places sanctified by the foot-prints of our Saviour. His father, to whom he had disclosed this wish, resolved to make so devout a pilgrimage himself, and departed, accompanied by his two sons, Willibald and Wunibald, and several other youths. Hardly, however, had the pious pilgrims reached Lucca, when it pleased the Almighty to remove St. Richard from this world, after a short illness. His two holy sons, although deeply grieved at their loss, continued their journey. Arriving at Rome they visited the tombs of the Apostles and other places consecrated to the memory of the many who had shed their blood for the faith of Christ, and thence, after a few months, St. Willibald set out for the Holy Land, accompanied by seven of the young noblemen of England. During the voyage they lived a most holy life, as Willibald had divided the day in such a manner, that certain hours were given to prayer, others to singing devout canticles, and the rest to pious discourses. They lived on alms, and seldom took anything but water and bread, while the bare ground was their bed at night. The dangers and hardships they encountered upon this long journey cannot be related in few words; hence, we will give only one of the incidents that occurred to them.

When St. Willibald and his companions had reached Emesa, a city of Phœnicia, where they visited the magnificent Church erected by St. Helena in honor of St. John, he was taken by the Saracens for a spy, and, with his companions, was imprisoned. God, however, touched the heart of a Christian merchant, who not only sent them necessary food, but also obtained permission for them to go, every three days, followed by a guard, into the church, to perform their devotions. Meanwhile, they knew not where to look for means to effect their liberation, as they could neither ransom themselves with money, nor yet make the Saracens believe that they had not come as spies, but as pilgrims. Hence they submitted to Providence, and were willing to live and die in chains for Christ's sake. But God miraculously delivered them when they least expected it. A Spanish merchant, whom business had brought to the city, looked with interest and compassion at the prisoners going to church, and asked them what had brought them into so unfortunate a situation. Having been told, and being convinced of the truth of their words, he represented their innocence so forcibly to the authorities, that they were released without ransom. Their joy on being informed of it was inexpressible, and after giving fervent thanks to the Almighty, they left the city, and proceeded on their way, until they had reached the place of their destination. The devotion with which, on their arrival, they visited all the

holy places, cannot be described, neither the heavenly comfort with which their souls were filled. All their sufferings were recompensed a thousandfold. God, however, desired to prove the virtue of his servant in the Holy Land. While assisting at Mass in the Church of St. Matthew at Gaza, he suddenly lost his sight. This misfortune, which would have plunged others into the deepest misery, or perhaps have made them complain against Providence, the Saint bore with such patient submission to the will of the Almighty, that all his companions were filled with admiration. After two months, while he was performing his devotional exercises in the Church of the Holy Cross, God restored his sight, and the Saint offered humble thanks for the divine favor. Not long after, he became very sick, but bearing his pain with the same heroic patience with which he had borne his imprisonment and blindness, he was soon miraculously restored to health. Having satisfied his pious desires in the Holy Land, he began his journey homeward. Arriving in Italy, he went to the celebrated Benedictine Monastery of Mount Cassino, and desired to receive the habit. At the end of ten years, during which he had been a perfect model of virtue to the whole community, he was sent by the Abbot, with another monk, to Rome to transact some important business.

Gregory III. at that time Pope, called him into his presence, and having asked him about his travels in the Holy Land, informed him that St. Boniface, who labored in Franconia and the neighboring countries, requested him as an assistant in converting the heathens; and hence the holy father commanded Willibald to go to Germany and assist him in disseminating Christianity. Willibald obeyed and was soon on his way. In Bavaria, he visited Uttilo, the reigning duke, who had founded the See of Frisingen: he met there, also, Suitger, one of the richest nobles of the land, who had offered St. Boniface to found, out of his own means, an episcopal See at Eichstadt. This pious man accompanied Willibald to St. Boniface, who was not less rejoiced at Willibald's arrival than at the liberality of Suitger. He immediately sent St. Willibald to inspect the place where they intended the new bishop's seat should be erected, and in case he should find everything suitable for it, to begin the necessary preparations for it without delay. St. Willibald found both place and neighborhood convenient, and the commencement was made for founding the new See.

Soon after, St. Boniface came to Frisingen, and thence to Eichstadt, where he raised St. Willibald to the priesthood, charging him not only to convert the people to Christianity, but also to lead them in the path of virtue. In the following year

he called him to Thuringia to be assisted by him in his apostolic labors. After the holy priest had thus given sufficient proofs of his zeal, St. Boniface consecrated him bishop, and installed him in the newly founded See of Eichstadt. During thirty-six years he discharged his high functions, never abating in his fervor to further the honor and glory of God, by converting the heathens and by exhorting the faithful to follow virtue and holiness. It may truly be said of him that he became all to all in order to win souls to Christ. Several times God visited him with painful maladies, all which he bore with edifying resignation, until, at length, it pleased the Lord to call him, in his 81st year, to receive his eternal reward. The Almighty honored him with many miracles, both before and after his death.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Pilgrimages to places specially dedicated to the Almighty, or to churches and chapels dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, or to some Saint, are not of recent origin, but are a very ancient and praiseworthy custom. It is unreasonable to blame or despise them on account of the abuses that sometimes occur. God himself commanded pilgrimages in the old Testament, and though they are not commanded in the New, experience tells us that they are agreeable to the Lord and beneficial to men. The great graces bestowed on many persons at the places of pilgrimage are an undeniable proof of this. The question why God bestows more favors at such places than at others, St. Augustine has long since answered when he said: "God is everywhere, and He who has created all things, cannot be confined to one place. But who can fathom the divine decree, why at some places miracles are wrought and not at others? As according to the testimony of the Apostle, all the Saints did not possess the gift to heal the sick, or to discern spirits, thus has He, who has given to each one according to His divine will, not

desired that such things should happen at all places." We know that in the Old Testament, God showed Himself more gracious at some places than at others, as for instance, at Jerusalem, at the Ark of the Covenant. Why then should it surprise us if He does the same in the New Testament? It is only to be regretted that not many are worthy of these graces, because their pilgrimage is not what it should be. They are either not actuated by piety in undertaking it, or they conduct themselves in going or coming, or even at the place of pilgrimage, in a manner not pleasing to God. If you will make a pilgrimage beneficial to your soul, make it after the example of St. Willibald. Undertake it with holy intentions, and avoid on the road and at the place itself, all that may displease God, and prevent you from deriving the desired benefit.

II. God permitted St. Willibald to be unjustly imprisoned. He also visited him with blindness and painful diseases. Sickness and adversity are not always a punishment for sin committed: heaven sends them also to the pious and innocent.

If you suffer innocently, follow the example of St. Willibald. He did not omit his prayers and other devout exercises during his sickness and blindness, neither did he lose his patience nor his trust in the Almighty. Therefore God released him most miraculously out of his prison, restored his sight, and recompensed him richly for the pious resignation with which he had suffered. The same great, mighty and extremely kind God is still able to free you from your sufferings and afflictions, whatever they may be. If He does not release you, He will richly reward you in heaven, for all you have patiently suffered on earth. Put your trust in Him, and call on Him for grace and assistance. Continue your prayers and other devotions. Do not say: "God will not hear me; He has forgotten me; He burdens me too heavily; He makes my suffering too long." Take well to heart the words of the pious Judith: "This is not a word that may draw down mercy, but that may rather stir up wrath." (Judith xiii.)

That you may, however, refrain more surely from such blasphemy, think of your past life. Have you never sinned against your God? What does your conscience say? If it, as I fear, tells you that this has been done often, dare not complain or murmur on account of your suffering: for, all is nothing in comparison with what you deserve. God, whom you have offended, might have taken you away in your sin, and precipitated you into hell. Is your suffering anything compared with hell, which you have deserved? Oh! suffer patiently and be silent; or if you speak, praise the Lord and give thanks to Him, for thus punishing you in mercy. Confess to heaven and earth that you have deserved much more. The innocent Job said: "I have sinned, and indeed I have offended, and I have not received what I have deserved" (Job xxxiii.). Oh! how much more reason have you to speak so, than Job. Remember it and suffer patiently.

THE EIGHTH DAY OF JULY.

ST ELIZABETH, QUEEN OF PORTUGAL.

St. Elizabeth, who according to the testimony of the Roman Breviary, may serve as a most perfect model of all Christian virtues to all persons, whether in a single, married, or widowed state, was the daughter of Peter III., King of Aragon, and of Constantia, daughter of Manfred, King of Sicily. From her earliest childhood she was extremely kind to the poor, and evinced the greatest inclination to piety. She was never seen at church except upon bended knees, in deep devotion. When she was eight years old she began to say daily the whole office of the Breviary, and this practice she continued during her life. At this time she began to fast, especially on Saturdays and vigils. Her disposition was

truly angelical, and her whole being, all her words and actions, an index to her pure and innocent soul. The powers of her mind were far above her years, and her virtues made her honored and esteemed by all. In one word, her life was not only good but also holy.

She was married early in life to Dionysius, King of Portugal, but changed not her pious exercises; she rather made use of her altered circumstances to increase them. Three times during the year she fasted forty days on water and bread. She had certain hours appointed for devout exercises and for work. She was never seen idle, always occupied either in praying, pious reading or work. All her work was for the adornment of the churches or the comfort of the poor. The holy Sacraments she received much more frequently than is generally done by persons of such exalted station, and always with great devotion and preparation. When they made her high station the pretext for preventing her from her long prayers, continued work and extreme bodily austerity, she said: "Where are prayer and self-abnegation more necessary and useful than where evil inclinations are most violent and dangers greatest?" Charity to the poor and to the sick filled her heart, and she was wont to say: "The only reason, why God raised me to the throne was that I should have means to assist the needy." To some of the poor she gave corn, to others clothing, and again for others she had houses built: none were sent away without alms in money. No day passed on which she did not herself visit some sick person, and God rewarded her great love towards the poor and sick by more than one miracle. One day, as she tenderly embraced a poor woman who was covered with ulcers, the woman immediately recovered. Every Friday during her forty days' fasts, and also on Maundy Thursday, she washed the feet of thirteen poor women. Among these, one day, was a woman who had an ulcer on her right foot. The holy queen not only washed the foot, but, in her zeal to mortify her senses, she even kissed it, and the ulcer disappeared suddenly. At another time she restored the sight of a person who was blind from her birth, and also healed several sick by only making the sign of the holy cross over them. Once she was carrying in her apron a considerable sum of money to be divided among the poor. The king, who met her, asked her what she had? "Roses," answered she; but, as it was not the season for flowers, the king was curious to see them. On opening her apron, the queen beheld, in reality, a quantity of roses; upon which the king, filled with astonishment, went away, while the queen gave humble thanks to God who had so graciously assisted her.

The king led a very licentious life, and although Elizabeth

was deeply grieved at the offence he gave to God and the wrong he did to her, she never displayed the slightest impatience at his vices. Treating him with unvarying kindness, she obeyed him in all that was lawful, and never complained, but increased her prayers that God might touch his heart with the grace of repentance. For this end she also performed many penances, and offered them to God for the salvation of her spouse. At last she obtained what she had so ceaselessly prayed for: the king reformed and began to lead a Christian life. Still God permitted that a page should accuse the pious and chaste queen to her husband as unduly favoring a noble youth whom she employed as almoner. The credulous king, inflamed with wrath, gave orders to a lime-burner to seize and cast into the lime-kiln a young man, who would call on him on the next day and ask whether he had executed the royal command. The following morning, the king sent the queen's almoner to the lime-pit with the message. Not knowing its import and passing by a church when the bell gave the signal for Mass, he entered, as he was accustomed to assist daily at the holy sacrifice, and not supposing that a delay in his errand would be of any consequence. Meanwhile the king was impatient to ascertain if his orders had been obeyed, and sent the accuser to the lime-pit to ask whether the royal command had been executed. The unhappy page obeyed, but hardly had the words passed his lips, when he was siezed and cast into the burning lime. Somewhat later, the other arrived with the same question, and, receiving the answer that the command had been duly fulfilled, he returned with it to his royal master. Greatly amazed at the sight of him, the king desired to know all that had happened, and, being informed of it, recognized the hand of Providence, and esteemed more highly than ever the innocence of the youth and the virtue of the queen. Some time later, Prince Alphonso headed a rebellion against his father, and although Elizabeth used every means in her power to prevent it, some wicked people persuaded the king that she was in favor of her son. Without investigating whether the accusation was true or false, the king deprived her of all her revenues, and banished her from the palace. But she bore this cross with humble submission to the decrees of Providence, and, not complaining against the king's injustice, placed as usual her trust in the Lord, who forsook her not in this great trial. Soon after, the king became convinced of her innocence, called her back to Court and most humbly begged her pardon. At her solicitation and out of love to her, he also received again into favor his rebellious son, and ever after lived in perfect unity with his pious consort. When, before his end, he was visited

with a most painful disease, the holy queen waited on him with the most admirable love and solicitude, and left him neither day nor night until he died, strengthened by the holy sacraments. No sooner had the king closed his eyes, than the holy queen went into an adjoining room, and, throwing herself down before the crucifix, she consecrated herself anew to the service of the Almighty. She then divested herself of all royal apparel, cut off her hair, and, clad in the habit of St. Clare, entered the hall where the nobility of the realm had assembled. Announcing to them that she had laid aside her royal dignity, she left the Court, and went into the convent of St. Clare, which she had founded and richly endowed, with the intention of joining the sisterhood. As it was, however, represented to her that she could do more in the world for the honor of God and the welfare of the needy, she had a dwelling erected for herself near the convent, where she passed the rest of her life in pious exercises and works of charity. Forgetting herself, all her thoughts were given to assist widows and orphans, and to comfort the sick and the prisoners. Twice she made a pilgrimage to Compostella, to the tomb of the holy apostle St. James: the first, immediately after the death of the king; the second, at the time of the Jubilee. The latter, during which she begged alms for her sustenance, she performed unknown and on foot, accompanied by two other ladies. On returning from this last pilgrimage, she was informed that her son Alphonso, now reigning king, was determined to make war upon a king nearly related to him. The holy widow, who had received from God the remarkable gift of bringing peace wherever she went, at once set out to reconcile the embittered hearts. When she arrived in Estremadura, she became dangerously ill, in consequence of the inconveniences she had suffered during the journey, and prepared herself carefully for her last hour. She received the holy Viaticum, in the habit of the sisters of St. Clare, and on her knees, at the foot of the Altar.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

People of both sexes, and in all stations of life may derive great benefit from the life of the holy queen Elizabeth. I. Youth may learn to devote themselves, from early childhood, to prayer, the frequentation of churches, and to due reverence in the sacred edifices.

II. Single persons may learn to live retired and chaste and to preserve their virtue by prayer, fasting and frequent partaking of the Blessed Sacrament. III. Married people may learn how to bear the faults of their spouses, to assist them in health and sickness, and to

be solicitous for the welfare of their souls. IV. The widowed may learn from the holy queen to withdraw from worldly pleasures and abandon all luxurious apparel, to love solitude, assist their neighbors and occupy themselves in other good works. V. Those whom God has placed in a higher station, may imitate her example, in humility, in love towards their neighbors, and in never neglecting the opportunities offered to them, to do good, to the honor of God and the comfort of the poor.

All Christians may imitate her devout exercises, her fasting, her almsgiving, and other deeds of kindness. If they cannot, like the holy queen, keep three fasts of forty days during the year, they ought at least to observe strictly those fasts which are commanded by the holy Church. All may imitate her heroic patience in adversity, and place their trust in God, ceaselessly praying to Him for aid as she did. Lastly, all true Christians ought to imitate her devotion and love to the Queen of heaven, and call on her in the same words as those used by Elizabeth, in health

and sickness, in life and in death. In our last moments, we shall need her help more than ever, and she is always willing to bestow it upon her children. She manifests herself particularly, at that time, as the refuge of sinners, and the comfort of all that are afflicted, as many histories prove. "The dying," says St. Jerome, "she not only assists, but comes to meet them." She prays to God for a happy death for them. This grace, as it is the greatest we can expect, we should daily pray for, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin. "Whoever desires to obtain favor of the Almighty," writes St. Bonaventure, "must, with all possible devotion, seek refuge with Mary: for as she is the Queen of Mercy, she cannot refuse anything to those who call upon her." Therefore repeat often with lips and heart: "Mary, Mother of Grace, Mother of Mercy! Protect me from the wicked enemy, and receive my soul at the hour of my death;" or: "Defend me from all evil, and remain my Queen and Mother. Assist me in my last combat, O Mother of Mercy!"

THE NINTH DAY OF JULY.

ST. KILIAN AND HIS COMPANIONS, MARTYRS.

St. Kilian, the glorious apostle of Franconia, was born in Scotland, the son of noble but not less pious parents. The Almighty, who had destined him to convert many thousand souls, bestowed on him the grace to lead, from early youth, a blameless life, and to make, when more advanced in years, such progress in virtue and divine science, that he was greatly beloved and venerated, as well by the clergy as by the laity. He had deep compassion for those who were yet blinded by idolatry, and felt within himself an irresistible impulse to labor for the salvation of their souls

One day, when he was musing on the words of Christ: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me," he made the resolution to devote himself to the salvation of souls. After he had been ordained priest, he persuaded some intimate friends to accompany him into the heathen countries and illuminate their darkness with the light of Christian faith. They were willing to depart with him, and Kilian left his home and property, crossed the sea, wandered through several provinces, and at length arrived at Wurtzburg, in Franconia. The inhabitants of that city, and indeed of the whole province, worshipped, before all other gods, the goddess Diana. The holy man, pitying their ignorance, went with his companions to Rome, to obtain the Pope's permission to preach the Gospel in that region, as well as in the neighboring states. The Pope gladly assented, consecrated Kilian bishop, invested him with the power to preach the Gospel to the heathens, and gave him many wholesome instructions for beginning and continuing his holy work. The newly consecrated bishop returned, immediately after receiving the Holy Father's blessing, and arrived at Wurtzburg, accompanied by Colman, a priest, and Totman, a deacon, the same who had left Scotland with him. Assisted by these, he began his apostolic labors. He preached the word of Christ and opposed idolatry with so much zeal, that, in a few days, many showed themselves ready to embrace the Christian faith. The many miracles which the holy bishop wrought, in testimony of the truth of his words, caused the heathens to recognize their error, and humbly request of him to baptize them. When Gosbert, at that period Duke of Franconia and an intelligent man, heard of this, he called the Saint into his presence and desired to hear the new faith explained by him. The holy bishop, accepting the invitation, spoke with such wisdom and eloquence, that the duke, after some more conversations with him, was convinced of the truth of his words, and promised to receive holy baptism publicly on the coming Easter festival. He kept his promise, and Kilian received him and a great many of the nobility, on the appointed day, into the bosom of the Christian Church, to the great joy of his heart. The example of the duke was soon imitated by thousands of his subjects, and Kilian entertained the hope soon to see the whole province come under the sweet yoke of the Saviour.

The duke grew daily in piety and virtue, and endeavored to be an example to his subjects. There was, however, one dark spot in his life that overshadowed all his goodness. Geila, or, as others write, Geilana, his brother's wife, lived with him. When St. Kilian heard of this, he begged God's aid in prayer,

and then went to the duke and told him that, according to the laws of the Church, his conduct was very sinful, and exhorted him to dismiss Geila. Gosbert, who deemed it impossible to part with Geila, was at first greatly troubled, but promised the Saint that he would consider his words, and think of the best way to send Geila from his Court, after the war was ended, to which he was just making preparations to go. Geila was informed of this, and, almost beside herself with rage, sought to revenge herself on the Saint, and determined to despatch him, before the return of the duke. Hiring two assassins, she promised them a large sum of money, if they would murder the bishop and his companions. The night on which this crime was to be committed had come, and St. Kilian, having said his prayers, had just lain down to rest, when an angel appeared to him, saying: "Rise, Kilian, thy work is done: only one contest more, and thou shalt gloriously reign with me." The Saint immediately arose, and awakening his companions, he exhorted them to be faithful; after which they prayed together, thus preparing themselves for the approaching struggle. While they were still on their knees, the assassins rushed into the room, but Kilian, going towards them, said: "Friends, what purpose brought you hither? You may execute the command of the duchess: we are ready to end our lives." Without uttering a word, the hirelings drew their swords and murdered St. Kilian and his two holy companions on the spot. Then, making a deep hole, they cast into it the holy relics, the vessels of the church, the books and everything they found belonging to the holy martyrs. This the wicked Geila had ordered them to do, in order that the criminal deed should never be revealed. The just God, however, soon made it known all over the land, by means of those who had endeavored to hide it. One of the assassins became possessed of the devil, and ran raving and howling through the streets, crying in fearful tones: "Oh! Kilian, how thou dost persecute me! I see the sword, stained with thy blood, above my head." Having repeated these words many times, he at last tore his limbs with his own teeth, and thus died a horrible death. The other murderer also became raving, and in despair killed himself with his own dagger. The godless Geila, the author of so wicked and cruel a deed, ended her life in the same manner. She also became possessed of the Evil One, and was terribly tormented. She herself—so was it ordained by God—had to confess her wickedness publicly; for she was heard crying: "It is just and right that I am tortured, for I have caused the holy men to be tortured. You persecute me too much, O Kilian! Colman, you are lighting the fire, and you, Totman,

increase it! Your vengeance is too great." After having thus raved for a long time, she expired with dreadful suffering. According to the testimony of Baronius, St. Kilian and his companions received the crown of martyrdom in the year 689. The Almighty revealed to the world, in the course of time, the holy relics of these faithful servants, and glorified them by many miracles. Baronius also ascribes to the powerful intercession of these holy martyrs the fact that the true Faith has remained in the province of Franconia, and that heresy, which, long after their glorious death, came to plant its seeds, was happily destroyed there, while other states of Germany lost the Faith almost entirely, to the irreparable damage of their inhabitants.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Kilian reproved the duke for his unlawful conduct, and endeavored to reform him, although he had to fear his wrath and the rage of a wicked woman. You have not to fear anything like this, and yet you are silent when you might prevent many wrongs by kind expostulations or by proper punishment. For example, you are silent or laugh when another makes unchaste remarks in your presence or slanders his neighbor, or curses. You might prevent him, but you neglect it. Is this a sign that true love to God fills your heart? "Christ is crucified before our very eyes," cries St. Thomas of Villanova, "and we are silent." Where is our love to God? If some one speaks disparagingly of your friends in your presence, you are not silent, and why? Because you love them. How then can I believe that you have one spark of love for God, if you listen in silence when He is offended, and do not endeavor to prevent it? Endeavor to do this in future, and try to prevent others from offending the Almighty. As far as those under you are concerned, as for instance, your children and domestics, you are under still greater obligations not to

neglect it. It is quite certain that parents and all those who possess authority over others may commit great sin, and even make themselves guilty of everlasting condemnation, if they silently pass over the faults of those under them, or do not punish them properly. They make themselves guilty of all those iniquities which those in their charge commit on account of their silence, or which they commit more freely on account of not being reprov'd. The punishment which parents have to expect from God for this we may learn from what happened to Heli, because he was too indulgent to his children, and did not duly punish their faults, as Holy Writ testifies. (I Kings, ii).

II. Almighty God punished in this world the murderers of St. Kilian, and the unchaste woman who instigated them to the criminal deed. And yet they had only deprived him of his bodily, his temporal life. How terrible will be the punishment that awaits those who have deprived their neighbor of his spiritual, his eternal life; who have been the murderers of his soul? And who are these? All those who advise their neighbors to

do wrong, or who incite them to it, either by words or bad example. Christ Himself calls the devil a murderer from the beginning, because he incited Eve to sin; and St. Augustine adds: "Do not suppose that you are no murderer, when you lead your neighbor to commit sin. You murder him by doing so," as Satan deprived Eve of her spiritual life, and hence became a murderer. "You have been guilty of as many murders as you have given occasion to sin," says St. Gregory. You deprive him also of eternal life, if he dies in his iniquities and is damned. What can you expect of divine justice? Certainly not heaven, if you do not repent. A murderer is already sentenced: "No murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (John, iii); "The murderers and the uncleanshall receive their reward in the pit filled with fire and burning brim-

stone." (Acts, xxi.) These words, addressed to those who murder the body, indicate that no less punishment will await those that murder the soul; for, a murder committed on the soul of any one, by leading him into sin which will deprive him of eternal life, is infinitely more deserving of punishment, than a murder committed on the body. If a temporal murder is a sin that cries to heaven and deserves hell, what sentence ought to be spoken against a spiritual murder? St. Thomas of Villanova hesitated not to say, that if he were certain that he had caused the ruin of one single soul, he would depart this life with greater fear than if he had murdered the bodies of a hundred persons. Be careful that you do not die, and appear before the judgment-seat of the Most High, with cause for such fear and trembling.

THE TENTH DAY OF JULY.

THE SEVEN BROTHERS, MARTYRS, SONS OF ST. FELICITAS.

The names of the seven brothers whose martyrdom is commemorated to-day, are: Januarius, Felix, Philip, Sylvan, Alexander, Vitalis and Martialis. Their mother was St. Felicitas, a matron greatly renowned in Rome, not only on account of her noble birth, but still more for her edifying life. After her husband's death, she laid aside all worldly magnificence and vowed to live in perfect chastity for the remainder of her life. The education of her sons was her greatest care, and as at that period, the Christians were most cruelly persecuted, she directed all her exhortations and instructions in such a manner, that she might impress deeply into their hearts constancy to the true Faith, contempt of temporal happiness, and even of life itself, and, at the same time, a high estimation of eternal happiness and a great desire to obtain it. She frequently spoke to them of the torments of the Christian martyrs in and out of Rome, and the great glories which therefore had been prepared for them in heaven; of the happiness of suffering or dying for Christ's sake.

"How happy should I be," said she, "if I should, one day, see you give your blood and life willingly out of love for Christ! How happy would you yourselves be for all eternity!" By these and similar words she awakened in the hearts of her sons a fervent desire to suffer and die for the faith of Christ. They spoke of nothing more frequently than of martyrdom, and declared to each other how they would despise all flatteries and caresses, all honors and riches of the world, and how gladly they would suffer pains and tortures. The pious mother listened with great inward joy to these words, and prayed daily to the Almighty to receive her children as an agreeable sacrifice.

God accepted her prayer. The idolatrous priests had observed that many were converted to the Christian faith by the edifying example of St. Felicitas and her sons. Hence they went to the Emperor, Marcus Aurelius, representing that the wrath of the gods rested on Rome because Felicitas, one of the most noble matrons, dared to alienate the inhabitants of the city from their worship; hence she ought to be compelled to offer a public sacrifice to the gods in order to appease them. The Emperor forthwith ordered Publius, the Prefect of the city, to attend to the request of the priests, and see that what they desired should be done. Publius, who greatly esteemed the Saint on account of her high birth and many noble qualities, sent for her, and, informing her of the Imperial command, entreated her to comply. He endeavored to persuade her by flatteries and promises, and at last, finding them of no avail, he proceeded to the most frightful menaces. But the Christian heroine said, fearlessly: "Thy menaces have no more power over me than thy flatteries. Neither I nor my sons will ever forsake the true Faith." "In that case," replied Publius, "you prepare your own ruin. But if you do not care for your own life, why should you become the murderess of your children? Consider, at least, their welfare and lives." "My children," said Felicitas, "will live in eternal happiness if they die for Christ's sake: should they, however, sacrifice to your gods, who are only devils, everlasting death will be their lot." Publius would say nothing further on that day, but dismissed her with the injunction to consider the matter well. The pious mother told her sons what had happened and spent the night with them in prayer, as she was convinced that they would suffer martyrdom.

On the following day, Publius repaired to the Place of Mars, and taking his seat as Judge, had Felicitas and her seven sons brought before him. All appeared cheerful, encouraging each other to bear bravely the approaching tortures. Publius, ad-

dressing the mother, said: "I presume that you have already changed your mind; but if not, look upon your children and take pity on them. In your power lies all their future happiness." After this he turned to the children and said: "Come, my dear children, I will procure you the happiest lot upon earth, if you are obedient to the emperor; but I am compelled to treat you most cruelly, should you oppose his commands." "Say rather," exclaimed Felicitas, solemnly addressing the Prefect, "that thou wilt be the cause of their eternal ruin with thy treacherous happiness." Then, turning towards her children, she encouraged them to constancy, like the heroic mother of the Maccabees, and said: "My beloved sons, look not upon the tyrant, but raise your eyes to heaven, and behold your God and Redeemer, Jesus Christ. He expects you, to place on your heads the crown of glory. As He has given His blood for your salvation, may you likewise give yours to His honor. Do not regard the torments with which you are menaced here below, but consider the joys which God promises you in heaven. Fight bravely, be not faint-hearted, but continue faithful in your love to Christ." Publius, furious that Felicitas dared in his presence to incite her children to disobey the imperial command, ordered her to be buffeted most barbarously. Then, calling the children to him one after another, he endeavored to win them with alternate promises and menaces. To the first he said: "Be wise, my son, obey the command of the emperor; if not, I shall have you scourged till you are dead." "My mother," said Januarius, "has spoken wisely, and I should act foolishly if I preferred the emperor's command to God's command. I do not fear scourging. My God will aid me that I may remain faithful, even unto death." Enraged at this dauntless answer, Publius ordered him to be scourged and cast into a dungeon. The same was done to the second, third, fourth, and fifth, as their answers breathed the same spirit as that of their brother. He then left nothing untried to induce at least the two youngest, Vitalis and Martialis, to forsake Christ, but found that they were not less brave and constant than the others. Vitalis said: "I am ready rather to give my life than sacrifice to the devils, your gods." Martialis, the youngest, fearing that they might spare him on account of his tender age, cried aloud: "I too am a Christian, like my brothers. I despise the idols as they do, and if their lives are taken, mine must be taken also." Publius, astonished at such unprecedented heroism, reported the whole proceedings to the emperor, who gave orders that they should all be executed.

Beyond description was the joy of the seven Christian heroes when their death was announced to them. They

hastened to the place of execution with greater eagerness than others to a cheerful entertainment, and lost, during their martyrdom, neither their courage nor their joy. Each encouraged the other, until all had gone to heaven. Januarius was scourged with loaded whips until he expired; Felix and Philip were beaten to death with clubs; Sylvanus was thrown down a precipice; Alexander, Vitalis, and Martialis received the crown of martyrdom by being executed with the sword. Felicitas, the pious mother, was present at the dreadful martyrdom of her sons, but, like the above-mentioned mother of the Maccabees, she continued to encourage them until the last had expired. After this, she was brought back to prison, where she suffered four months longer, when at last she was beheaded, and thus rejoined her seven sons in heaven. Her festival is therefore commemorated on the 23d day of November. This glorious martyrdom took place in the 171st year of the Christian Era.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. How happy a Mother was St. Felicitas who gave to heaven as many martyrs as she had sons! Her careful instructions in the true faith, her exhortations highly to venerate it, her encouragement to endure suffering and torments, her pious discourses of the great reward which the martyrs receive in heaven, made her children holy, and opened the gates of heaven to them. If she had lived and spoken as many mothers do at the present time, she would surely have brought up more than one to eternal misery.

Christian Parents! on your conduct, on your instructions, on your discourses, depends mostly the salvation or the damnation of your children. If they see that your conduct is not according to the laws of God and the Church, if they hear from your mouth nothing but lies, slander, unchaste or blasphemous words, if you speak to them more of dresses, dancing, gambling, theatres and other worldly pleasures, than of God and of virtue; how shall

they become acquainted with the true spirit of Christianity, how shall they learn how to save their souls? Oh! be watchful of your conduct and your discourse, if you wish to bring up your children as servants of the Most High, as future inhabitants of heaven.

II. How happy were the sons who possessed so holy a mother! But what would have availed their mother's sanctity to them, if they had not followed her admonitions and commands?

Christian children! if God has blessed you with parents who are solicitous for your salvation, give thanks to Him. Pray for them, and receive their instructions and reproofs willingly and obediently, that one day, you may rejoice with them for all eternity in heaven. The seven holy martyrs rejoice now with their mother in heaven, and doubtless give her ceaseless thanks for the careful instruction she imparted to them; while she is not less happy that they followed her advice

How many children may there be in hell who ceaselessly curse their parents for having allowed them too much liberty, for not having punished their faults, for not having kept them in the right path, or who even misled them to do evil by their discourse and example, and thus became the cause of their eternal ruin. Likewise there are parents who curse the disobedience, wickedness, and obstinacy of their children. If you, father or mother, desire not to be counted among these unhappy ones, follow the example of St. Felicitas and remember the admonition of the Holy Ghost: "Instruct thy son," by word and example "and he shall refresh thee, and shall give delight to thy soul." (Prov. xxix.) And again: "Hast thou children? Instruct them, and bow down their neck from their youth." (Eccl. vii.) And you, my child, if you will not suffer during all eternity in hell, be obedient to the command of God, which is as follows: "My son"—my daughter—hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother." (Prov. i.)

THE ELEVENTH DAY OF JULY.

THE BLESSED PETER FOURRIER.

In the year 1730, Pope Benedict XIII beatified with the usual solemnities, Peter Fourrier, an eminent servant of our Lord, and the glorious founder of the Congregation or society of our dear Lady. He was born in 1565 at Mirecour, a small village in France. His parents were indigent but very pious people, and Peter's heart seemed from childhood to be filled with love for the Almighty. At Pont-a-Mousson he devoted himself to study, and progressed equally in virtue and knowledge. The name of a learned man, and what is still more, of a Saint, was already then given him. When twenty years old, he went into the Abbey of the regular canons of St. Augustine, desiring to serve God more perfectly. At the end of his probation, he continued his studies at the above mentioned place and was ordained priest at his return.

The unusual zeal which this servant of God manifested in all exercises of virtue caused the less fervent priests to become tired of him, and endeavor to remove him. Hence three parishes were found, of which Peter was to select one where he might expend all his fervor in laboring for the salvation of souls. Not knowing which one to choose, he asked the advice of a Jesuit, John Fourrier, one of his relatives, who replied: "The first two are profitable and quiet: the third yields very little, but needs a great deal of labor." Peter reflected no longer, but seeking

only the honor of God and the welfare of men, he chose, without hesitation, the poor and toilsome parish of Mataincour. The morals of the inhabitants were so depraved, that it was called "little Geneva"; but the zealous priest commenced his work of conversion so bravely, that after three years, by his kind words and constant exhortation, but still more by his bright example of virtue, Mataincour might serve as a model to all the other parishes. Not content with the good he did in his own parish, the unwearied servant of the Lord went to other places, fought against vices, refuted heresies, destroyed errors and planted the seed of the Christian virtues. In the County of Salm, where heresy had a free field, he not only converted all the heretics to the truth of the Catholic religion in six months, but led them also upon the path of virtue. It cost him, however, far greater labor to reform the abuses which had crept into several houses of his order: but in this he also succeeded, with the divine assistance. That which, however, confers the most lasting honor upon him is the founding of the Society of our Dear Lady. By his advice, dictated by the zeal he had for the salvation of souls, several pious ladies consecrated their virginity to God, and obliged themselves at the same time to instruct children in reading, writing, sewing and other useful knowledge. The association of these virgins which Peter founded under the protection of the Blessed Virgin, was sanctioned by the Pope, and rapidly increased, to the great benefit of youth. After the holy founder had given regulations to this society, he became Superior of the Canons he had reformed and directed them wisely by precept and example. At length, during the war in the year 1636, he, with several of the Canons, was driven away from Lorraine, and coming into Burgundy, he remained for some time, in a small village named Gray, where he instructed the young.

The Almighty, desiring to bestow upon his servant the recompense he had so well merited, sent him a violent attack of fever. Receiving it as a fore-runner of death, the Saint prepared himself for his last hour by devoutly receiving the holy Sacraments. The time still left to him upon earth, he employed in fervent prayers, sometimes kissing the Crucifix amid pious ejaculations; at others, casting his eyes upon an image of the Blessed Virgin, and saying: "Mary, prove thyself a mother, and because I have always regarded thee as such, recognize thou me also for thy unworthy son." He desired that they should frequently say to him aloud: "We have a gracious Lord: we have a gracious Lady." At other times, he had pious books read to him, because he would not pass a moment without deriving some

benefit. His joy upon earth was that he was still able to celebrate devoutly the Festival of the Immaculate Conception. The following day, December the ninth, he signed himself three times with the holy Cross, and gave his soul, so richly adorned with virtues, into the charge of the Blessed Virgin, in whom he had so perfectly confided from his most tender years. Many gave a sworn testimony, that at the moment of his death, they saw a bright light rising from his dwelling towards heaven. His whole life, so to say, had been a flame of devotion fervently rising to the throne of God. His love of God and of his neighbors, was among his most remarkable virtues. The former was so great, that at the time of prayer he was seen surrounded by a heavenly light, his face beaming and his whole being as if raised in ecstasy above the earth. He spoke of nothing but God and things conducive to His honor. Frequently he was heard saying with solemn pathos: "My God! I am thine and thou art mine; thou art God, and my God!" He gave to prayer all the time which was left him after the discharge of his functions, and was in communion with his Saviour during the greater part of the night. He undertook nothing, without having first, by prayer, asked the advice and assistance of the Almighty. All his actions had but one aim, to further the honor of God. The principal rule by which he was guided, and which he also recommended to others, was, to consider in all affairs whether they were pleasing to God. Nothing saddened him more deeply than when he heard that God had been offended, and he tried to prevent sin, whenever it was in his power. He himself detested every shadow of what might displease God: a true sign of his love for Him. Of his love for his neighbor a great number of examples are related in his life. His parishioners and others in his charge, he loved as if they had been his own children, and evinced a constant solicitude for their temporal and spiritual welfare. On account of the apostolic zeal which he displayed in abolishing abuses, and uprooting vice which had become habits, he was slandered and persecuted by many, but he was to all of them as kind and obliging as he was to his best friends. One ruffian, whom Peter endeavored to turn from the evil path he was pursuing, attacked him one day, and beat him until some persons hastened to save the servant of God from his hands. They wished to give the man over to the authorities and have him punished, but Peter concealed him in his house until peace was restored, and the wicked man, at his intercession was pardoned. The poor and needy he assisted as much as his means permitted, carrying the alms into their dwelling himself, and endeavoring to incite his parishioners to equal works

of Christian charity. The sick he waited on with the most tender care; and when he was chosen Superior, he reserved to himself the office of nursing them, passing whole nights in serving them with untiring love. Once, when he was travelling accompanied by a servant, the latter became dangerously sick. Peter acted as nurse, laid him in the bed which had been prepared for himself, fed him, lifted him in and out of bed, in fact, did everything for him that circumstances required, until the man was restored. In such a manner he manifested his love for his neighbors in corporal necessities and afflictions. Still deeper was his solicitude for their spiritual welfare: his only desire was to lead all those in his charge to heaven. All his admonitions had this one great end: to cause them to avoid sin and practise virtue. Many prayers, many penances and masses he offered to God, for the conversion of heretics and hardened sinners. He endeavored to move them to repentance by gentleness and kindness. It is known that with tears in his eyes and on bended knees, he begged some to repent and do penance. When he perceived that any one was tempted to turn away again from the narrow path of repentance and piety, he used most ingenious means to prevent it and to strengthen him in his good resolution. A nun desired to leave the convent and return to the world. Peter did all in his power to deter her; and when all his exhortations proved vain, he said: Wander then away; but before leaving, bid farewell to the Blessed Virgin in the words of a prayer, which I have written for you upon this paper. The prayer was as follows: I have come to thank thee, O Lady, that thou didst deign to receive me among thy daughters. This grace, however, I will no longer enjoy, as the world is dearer to me than thou and thy Son. Taking farewell of you both, I return into the world, leaving it to others to serve you, as I no longer desire thus to fulfil this sacred office. The nun, not knowing what was written upon the paper, took it joyfully. But when, before an image of the Blessed Virgin, she read what it contained, she was moved to tears, and repenting of her fault, resolved to remain in the convent until her death; a promise which she faithfully kept. In this manner did Peter prove his love towards his neighbor in spiritual affliction. He often made use of the words of St. Ambrose: "To be useful to all and hurtful to none." His whole conduct was regulated in accordance with this principle; as he endeavored to further the spiritual and temporal welfare of all, and not to do the least harm to any one.

This glorious servant of the Most High is represented, bearing in his hand a lily and a Cross, as emblems of his two most eminent virtues. The lily indicates his unspotted innocence

and purity ; the cross, his unceasing mortification and penance. His life was truly distinguished by purity and self-immolation. The innocence which he received in holy baptism, he never lost through a mortal sin. In avoiding those sins which we call venial he manifested more anxiety than many do to avoid those that are mortal. Because he loved the Lord, he detested and shunned the least thing that could displease Him. Angelical purity he preserved during his whole life, although often in great danger of losing it. As founder and director of a Congregation of religious virgins, he came constantly in contact with them but used great precaution. His face bore always an earnest, dignified expression and he so well controlled his eyes, that they never wandered in curiosity upon those with whom he conversed. He was never seen laughing or jesting with any one, and his conversations were never longer than was absolutely necessary. He was a bitter enemy of all speeches or songs that were in the least obscene, and used all his influence to destroy all inclination to them in his parishioners. From his early youth, he was devout to the Virgin Mother, in order that by her intercession, he might preserve his purity intact. For this purpose he constantly macerated his body and used the utmost rigor with regard to it. His sustenance was roots and vegetables, and he partook of only one meal during the day. Sometimes, however, no food passed his lips during three days. He never took wine, until, when advanced in years, it was prescribed for him. Water was his usual drink, which he did not take to refresh himself, but only as it was absolutely needed. When, during a sultry summer-day, he was preaching to the nuns, one of them, remarking that his lips were so parched that he could hardly speak, brought him some fresh water. Taking the cup in his hand, he said : " Truly this drink would be refreshing to me, but it is better that, following the example of King David, I abstain from it out of love to God." Thereupon, he poured the water out, consecrating it to the Almighty as David had done. He wore no linen, but instead of it, a rough hair-shirt, of which he never divested himself except when it was torn, or when, during sickness, he was obliged to lay it aside. He scourged himself so mercilessly, that his back became one deep wound. On one of his feet he had a sore which he had concealed until he could no longer walk. It took the surgeon five hours to cut the mortified flesh out of it, and during all this time, not one word of complaint passed the lips of the Saint. For forty years his bed was a board, his pillow some books, and his only covering a cloak. In the coldest days of the winter, his room was heated only when some one came to visit him, or

when he was ill. Thus did this servant of God endeavor to mortify his body in every possible manner, and to lead a penitential life. And yet it seemed to him that all this was not sufficient to gain life everlasting. One day when a certain nobleman said that he would willingly be a poor beggar to be as sure of salvation as Peter, the latter was horrified, and said: "Oh! Sir, God judges differently from men. If St. Paul feared to be cast away by God, how then should I not fear!" and weeping bitterly after these words, he went away. God himself proved, to the whole Christian world, the holiness of his servant, by many miracles.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. You see in the hands of blessed Peter Fourrier, a snow-white lily and a cross. You have heard the reason why he is thus represented. Happy those who are one day able to appear before God with such emblems of their innocence and penance. One of these two must a man be in possession of, if he desires to enter heaven; for, these two roads are the only ones leading to it, namely, that of innocence and that of penance. Do you hope to walk on both of these, or at least upon one of them? Will you bear the lily? Ah! it does not belong to you, if you have lost your innocence. Or will you bear the Cross? But in what consists your penance? You seldom repent of your sins; you do not even think of them at all. You will hear nothing of self-abnegation. You refuse not to your body anything it desires. You only study how you can give it all that is agreeable. How dare you, therefore, on account of your penance, hope to gain heaven? How can you show a cross to the Almighty as an emblem of your penance? Commence from to-day to strive for the true spirit of penance, if you earnestly desire to save your soul.

II. The blessed Peter endeavored to follow the example of St. Ambrose, and be useful to all men and hurtful to none, as well temporally as spiritually. Happy are those who

imitate this example. You can be useful to man, as far as the body is concerned, by different works of charity. You can be useful to him, concerning his soul, by exhorting him to do good, by restraining him from evil, by good example, prayer, and works of spiritual charity. On the contrary, you can harm your neighbor, as far as temporal or bodily welfare is concerned, by deceit, falsehood, injustice, false witness, theft, strife, contention, &c. Concerning his soul, you wrong him, by inciting him to sin, or by advising or assisting him to do evil; by giving scandal, either in word or deed, by preventing him from doing good, &c. If you desire to work out your salvation, make use of every opportunity to benefit your neighbor, and take heed that you never in the least harm him. The love which you owe to your neighbor requires this; Christ commands you to love him as you love yourself. Would you like any one to wrong you? Most certainly not, but quite the contrary. Just so, Christ commands that we shall love our neighbors as He has loved us. Has Christ loved any one in soul or body? Most assuredly; He sought to be useful to all in soul and body. Look on this example and follow it: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." (John, xv.)

THE TWELFTH DAY OF JULY.

ST. JOHN GUALBERT.

The great holiness of John Gualbert began with one single act of self-denial. He was born at Florence, of noble parents, and although brought up in the Christian faith, he was but little instructed in the way of living a Christian life. When, in riper years, he entered the army, he learned still less of Christian virtue. When Hugh, his only brother, was assassinated by a young nobleman for unknown reasons, his father vowed to search everywhere for the murderer, and to kill him without mercy; commanding his son, Gualbert, to do the same if an opportunity should be offered to avenge the death of his brother. John showed himself as willing to obey the command, as his father had been willing to give it. On Good Friday, when John was returning from the country to Florence, he met the one on whom he was so eager to take revenge. The road where they met was so narrow, that the murderer saw no chance of escape; and as he had no weapons to defend himself, he fell on his knees and cried: "For the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, who died to-day, have pity and spare my life." John, who had immediately drawn his sword on seeing him, was about to rush on him; but when he heard these words spoken by the murderer, he suddenly stopped. Pondering how Christ had not only forgiven His enemies for greater crimes, but had also prayed for them to His heavenly Father, his heart softened, and all desire for revenge fled in one moment. Casting aside his sword, he raised the assassin from the ground, embraced him and said: "What you ask for the love of our Lord, I cannot refuse. I will spare your life and forgive your crime." After having so heroically conquered himself, and reconciled himself with his bitterest enemy, John went into the first church to which he came, and kneeling down before the image of the crucified Saviour, prayed that Christ might, in mercy and grace, release him also from his offences. The image upon the cross bowed its head towards him as a sign that his prayer had been graciously received. This unexpected miracle made so deep an impression upon John, and the divine grace operated so strongly upon him, that he instantly resolved henceforth to serve God alone. Repairing to the monastery of St. Minias, he begged to be admitted among the number of the religious. His father was at first violently opposed to it, but when he saw that John had cut off his hair, to indicate that he was in earnest, he not only relented, but praised

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his perseverance, and admonished him to remain firm in his resolution. John, however, needed not this admonition; he remained firm, and aspired with such zeal to spiritual perfection, that, after a very short time, he deserved to be placed as a model for all religious, in true devotion, humility and obedience. The zeal he manifested in the service of God at the beginning of his conversion, never decreased, but continued unaltered until his end. After the death of the Abbot, he was unanimously chosen as his successor. But nothing could induce him to accept the dignity offered to him, and to escape further persuasion, and to serve God more perfectly, he went, with several virtuous ecclesiastics to St. Romuald, at the hermitage of Camaldoli, where he remained for some time. As, however, this holy man informed him that he was chosen by God to become the founder of a new order, he repaired to a place, a few miles from Florence, which, on account of the many trees that shaded it, was called Vallis Umbrosa, or the shaded valley. There he met two hermits with whom he and his companions resolved to remain. The life he led while there was very holy, his occupation consisting of praying, fasting, watching and pious contemplations. When this became known in the surrounding country, several men and youths came to him, desiring to lead a pious life under his direction. As the number of these daily increased, he erected a monastery and founded an order, which soon became famous in all Italy. He became its first Abbot, but governed those under him more by his example than by precept and admonitions. It was a common saying, that if any one wished to know who was the Abbot of the monastery, he had only to observe who was the most humble, zealous, devout and patient among the brotherhood. Before he died, he had the comfort to count twelve monasteries founded by him, all filled with zealous servants of the Almighty. Towards others he was compassionate and kind, but towards himself, extremely austere. The poor he assisted in every possible manner, not even sparing the sacred vessels of the Church, if he had no other means to aid them. He fasted most rigorously, and although he was a great sufferer, he refused to be exempted from the obligation of fasting. He prepared himself most devoutly for his end when he felt it approaching; and after having received the Holy Sacrament, he called all the religious to him, and gave them his last exhortation to live in love and unity: to maintain strictly the regulations of the order, and to meditate frequently on death and the last judgment. His fervent desire to see God he expressed in the often repeated words of the Psalmist: "My soul thirsteth after God. When shall I go and appear before the Lord!" At last, God granted the desire of

his holy servant, and called him to eternal life, in the year of our Lord 1073, and the 74th of his life. The inscription on his tomb, which he himself composed, was as follows: "I, John, believe and confess the faith which the Apostles preached, and the holy Fathers professed in the four councils of the Church." St. John was honored during his life with the gifts of reading the innermost thoughts of the heart, curing the sick and the possessed by making the sign of the holy cross over them. After his death his tomb became an universal refuge for the oppressed and forsaken, on account of the graces which were there bestowed upon them, through his intercession.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Out of his love for Christ, St. John pardoned his enemy from the depth of his heart. Are you willing to do the same? Has not Jesus done the same for you? Has He not already often pardoned the many and great offences with which you had offended Him? Yet you consider so long whether you shall pardon your neighbor who has offended you only by a few words, or otherwise done you a trifling wrong. Oh shame! How dare you call yourself a Christian when you, as such, ought to follow the example of Christ? How can you expect that Christ will pardon your sins? Do you not know that He has very clearly said in the Gospel, that He will not pardon you, if you do not forgive your neighbor? If your neighbor does not deserve it, you still owe it to Christ. For love of Him, pardon the offences other have done to you. "God ordains it," writes St. Thomas of Villanova, "God commands it, and hence it should be agreeable to us. What will not we do to please the friend we love? If our friends ask for those who offended us, we again receive them into favor and restore them to our friendship. Christian reader who actest thus for love of thy friend, wilt thou not do the same out of love to Christ, who

does not ask it of thee, but commands it? What is your answer?

Do not hesitate, but prostrating say, with lips and heart, "Yes, my crucified Lord, for love of Thee, and because Thou commandest it, I pardon every wrong that has ever been done to me by men, and I hope Thou also wilt forgive my iniquities."

II. St. John never allowed himself to grow sluggish in the service of the Most High and in his solicitude for his salvation. How is it with you in this respect? You have often begun to serve God, and work for your salvation with great fervor because you were convinced that this is required to obtain eternal life. But how long did it last? Ah! sometimes a few days had hardly passed when you returned to your former sluggishness. You desire to serve God, but only so far as it is convenient to you, only so far as not to offend Him by a mortal sin. Lesser offences you do not mind. You think of the salvation of your soul, but not seriously and without forcing yourself to do all that you know is required of you. How do you suppose the Almighty regards your indolence? Can you imagine that He will reward with eternal life such coldness in His service? If you had a servant who

was so lazy, so careless in his duties, or who performed the work you gave him to do so negligently, as you attend to the service of God and the work of your salvation, would you be pleased with him or reward him richly at the end of the year? I do not believe it. And just as little ought you to imagine that God is pleased with your indolence, or that He will bestow on you an eternal reward at the end of your life. To good, faithful and fervent servants He has promised heaven; but one who is indolent cannot expect this reward. "Let nobody expect," says St. Chrysostom, "that after leading a tepid, idle life, he will enter heaven." This may not be. "Because thou

art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth." (Apoc. iii.) This is the divine menace. Sluggishness leads slowly to great sin and finally to destruction. If you desire to avoid this, begin anew to serve God with fervor and to work diligently for your salvation. But continue in it until your end; otherwise you will repent of it, but unavailingly, in your last hours, and still more in eternity. "When your last hour arrives, you will judge quite differently from what you did in life, and will bitterly repent that you have been so tepid and so negligent," says Thomas à Kempis.

THE THIRTEENTH DAY OF JULY.

ST. CAMILLUS OF LELLIS.

On the Festival of the Holy Apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul, in the year 1746, Benedict XIV., with great solemnity, canonized Camillus, the founder of the congregation of regular priests, who, besides the three usual vows, bound themselves especially to serve the sick. Camillus was born in 1550, in the diocese of Theatie, in the kingdom of Naples. His mother dreamed before he was born, that she had given birth to a boy, who wore upon his breast a cross, and who was followed by a great many other boys, who wore the same emblem. The signification of this dream was not recognized until St. Camillus had founded an order, whose members, in consequence of a decree of the Pope, wore a dark red cross on the right side of the breast. The first years of his life were spent piously under the eyes of his parents; but later he became so addicted to games of chance, that he not only lost all he possessed, but also visibly injured his health. Obligated by poverty, he hired himself as nurse in a hospital, but soon becoming tired of this, he joined the army. The life of a soldier pleased him still less, and he therefore took service in a Capuchin cloister, not knowing what other course to pursue. God at length had compassion on the lost sheep, and once more

led him upon the right road. The cause of this was a sermon which he heard by chance, and even against his will. Pondering on it, he suddenly recognized his iniquities, and the judgment which he had to expect on account of them, and casting himself on the ground, he bitterly bewailed his past life, and resolved most earnestly to change it. From that moment, he appeared a different man, and having made a sorrowful confession, he not only avoided every shadow of sin, but also desired to be admitted into the seraphic order of St. Francis. He was received, but dismissed again before his probation had ended, in consequence of a sore on one of his feet, from which he had suffered a long time, and which made it impossible for him to perform the work assigned him. Sadly disappointed, Camillus went to Rome, to the hospital of St. James, where, as mentioned above, he had served for a time. God so directed it, that he was entrusted with the administration of the finances; in which office he consecrated himself entirely to the sick. Perceiving that the hired nurses performed their duties with negligence, he deliberated within himself, how he might obtain nurses, who, to receive an eternal recompense, should, after his example, wait upon the sick. Consulting St. Philip Neri, who was then living at Rome, he founded a society to which were admitted only those who were willing to serve the sick without any temporal reward. This society at first consisted of only a few secular persons; but these were soon joined by several priests, who bought themselves a house in which they might reside in common.

This society formed itself into a religious order, and it spread as well over Italy and Sicily, as over other parts of Europe. The members of it nursed the sick, day and night, as well in hospitals as in private houses, and gave them every assistance, as well temporal as spiritual. St. Camillus was an example to all. Exhorted by St. Philip Neri, he had followed the example of St. Ignatius, and though already advanced in years, had devoted himself to study and was ordained priest, that he might assist the sick spiritually as well as corporally. The bull of his canonization proves that the most devoted mother could not have nursed her only child with greater love, than St. Camillus bestowed without exception upon all the sick. Whenever one was found, he went to comfort and to cheer him: he gave medicine, cleansed the bed and room, bandaged wounds, and in one word, did all that charity could think of or the condition of the sick require. Thus he acted uniformly towards all, but especially towards those who awakened in others aversion, on account of many sores, bad odors, or other disgusting circumstances. He

often remained whole nights, without food or sleep, with them, although greatly suffering himself from the sore on his foot, to which we have alluded above. More than once he was so exhausted by his labors, that he fainted away by the side of the sick ; but he continued in his work of love, while he had any strength left. At the time of a terrible pestilence which ravaged Rome and several other cities, he worked real miracles of Christian charity. He went with his brethren through all the streets, assisting the suffering. He carried many, whom he found lying in the streets, stricken down by the pestilence, into the house where he and his priests resided, and nursed them there most tenderly, without in the least fearing death or infection. The same zeal he manifested at Milan and Nola, whither he went to nurse the sick at the time of the pestilence. He was incited to these great sacrifices by the love of God, which, since his conversion, inflamed his whole heart. He desired to gain numberless souls, to awaken in them an equal love to God and hatred of sin. Hence, his first care was that the sick should reconcile themselves to their Maker, by confession, and bear their sufferings patiently. The whole life of this Saint was, according to the above mentioned bull, truly divine. At the time of prayer they often found him in ecstasy, and surrounded by a heavenly light, or raised high up from the ground. St. Philip Neri gave evidence that he frequently saw angels standing beside St. Camillus while they waited upon the sick. God graced him also, with the gift of prophecy, and of miraculously restoring the sick in an instant, of which his life offers many examples. The inhabitants of Rome, therefore, looked upon him as a Saint, and greatly esteemed him ; he, however, humbled himself beneath all on account of the sins of his youth, over which he daily wept bitterly ; he deemed himself unworthy to live among men. He esteemed and called himself the greatest sinner, who had deserved hell a thousand times. To praise him was only to rouse his indignation or to sadden him. He firmly refused the name of Founder of a religious order, and although for twenty-seven years he discharged the functions of an Abbot, he rested not until he was allowed to resign the office, and live under the obedience of another. St. Camillus united with profound humility and desire to obey, the virtue of mortification. Notwithstanding the great hardship of nursing the sick, and the pain that for years his foot gave him, he mortified his body by continual fasting, watching, and other penances, in such a manner that the prolongation of his life was regarded as a real miracle. A happy death ended, at last, his holy and useful life, in the year 1614, at the age of 60, after he had endured for 32 months, a most painful malady.

The thought of the torments of hell which he had merited by his transgressions, made, according to his own words, all suffering easy to bear. Before his end, he admonished his brethren to continue in their work of love to God and men. The many miracles that have taken place since his death by his intercession, have made the name of St. Camillus famous over the whole Christian world.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Camillus was for some time in his youth, addicted to gambling, and on account of it, not only his fortune had suffered, but also his health. This fault he corrected later, and weeping over it as long as he lived, he spent his remaining years in prayer and constant works of Christian charity. Playing is in itself no sin, if it is honest, not overstepping proper bounds, and is not done with sinful intentions. But it is also sure that by play we can commit not only venial, but mortal sin: first, if the play is dishonest, or such as gives occasion to mortal sin: secondly, if we give too much time to play, like it immoderately, or make a habit of it, neglecting, in consequence of it, the duties of our office, or station in life: or if by it we do considerable damage to our temporal affairs; thirdly, when we play only because we do not love to work, or from an unbounded love of money or from any similar cause; fourthly, when we know that play will lead us to cursing, blaspheming, lying, &c; finally, when we tempt others to dishonest or otherwise sinful plays. If you have done wrong in such a manner, correct it earnestly while time is left you: it will otherwise harm you more than you imagine. St. Francis Borgia used to say that play carried with it a threefold injury: for we lose by it, first our money, secondly, our time; thirdly, our devotion and recollection. There may be some who do not lose money, but only time, which

in itself is more unpardonable and injurious than if we lost all that we possess. This alone should prevent you from play: for, according to the words of St. Anthony: "As no temporal good is more precious than time, hence no loss can be greater, nor do us more harm." To this must be added the loss of devotion or recollection. Those who play are not devout. They prefer the game to devotional exercises, as experience teaches; and their conscience is generally soiled with many sins to which play either gives indirect occasion, or which occur during it. How terrible a damage for soul and body! Can the gain which we seek in gaming ever be a recompense for all this?

II. St. Camillus thought, while afflicted with his painful malady, of the torments of hell and by this eased his suffering. Follow his example. If you have to suffer, think of hell which you have oftener deserved than the Saint, and give thanks to God that He so graciously punishes you in this world, when He in accordance with divine justice, might have punished you so much more terribly. If your trials are hard to bear, say to yourself: "All my suffering is not yet that of hell: my pains are as nothing compared with the pains of hell." If your afflictions last long, cheer yourself with the thought: "My sorrows do not last as long as those of the damned in hell: my grief will end, but that of the damned never ends."

How would those condemned rejoice and give thanks to God if their torments were not greater and lasted not longer than mine!" If you think and speak thus, no impatience will overpower you, much less will you begin to murmur and complain.

"One ought to give thanks to the Almighty," says St. Jerome, "and say always: "Praised be the Most High! I recognize that I suffer much less than I deserve. My suffering is small in comparison with my sins."

THE FOURTEENTH DAY OF JULY.

ST. BONAVENTURE, BISHOP AND CARDINAL.

The Seraphic Doctor, St. Bonaventure, was born in 1221, at Balneoregio, in the State of Tuscany. His parents were very distinguished people, not only on account of their nobility and great riches, but still more for their piety and virtues. When scarcely four years old, Bonaventure became dangerously sick and the physicians despaired of his life. His mother appealed to St. Francis of Assisium, who was still living at that period, begging him to obtain, by his prayers, her son's life from God. She promised to bring him up to the honor of the Almighty, and in the course of time to consecrate him entirely to His divine service in the Order founded by St. Francis. The latter prayed for the sick child and the malady was subdued. In regard to this miracle the holy man cried: "O Buona Ventura!" which means, "Oh happy event!" and from that time they called the child, so miraculously cured, Bonaventure, although at the baptismal font it had received the name of John.

Arrived at the period when reason awakens, Bonaventure heard of the promise his mother had made in regard to him and fulfilled it by entering joyfully into the Order of St. Francis. After having finished his probation, he went to Paris to devote himself to study, and his progress in learning was as great as his advancement in virtue, especially in humility, constant self-denial, perfect obedience, great love of his crucified Lord, and ardent devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. He meditated daily on the passion and death of Christ, and spent as much time as he could in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. He seldom received Holy Communion, especially when he himself said Mass, without shedding many tears. His innocence he preserved inviolate. The celebrated Doctor Alexander of Hales, under whom Bonaventure studied, used to say, that it seemed to him that he had not committed any sin in Adam; so strictly did he



SAINT BONAVENTURE.

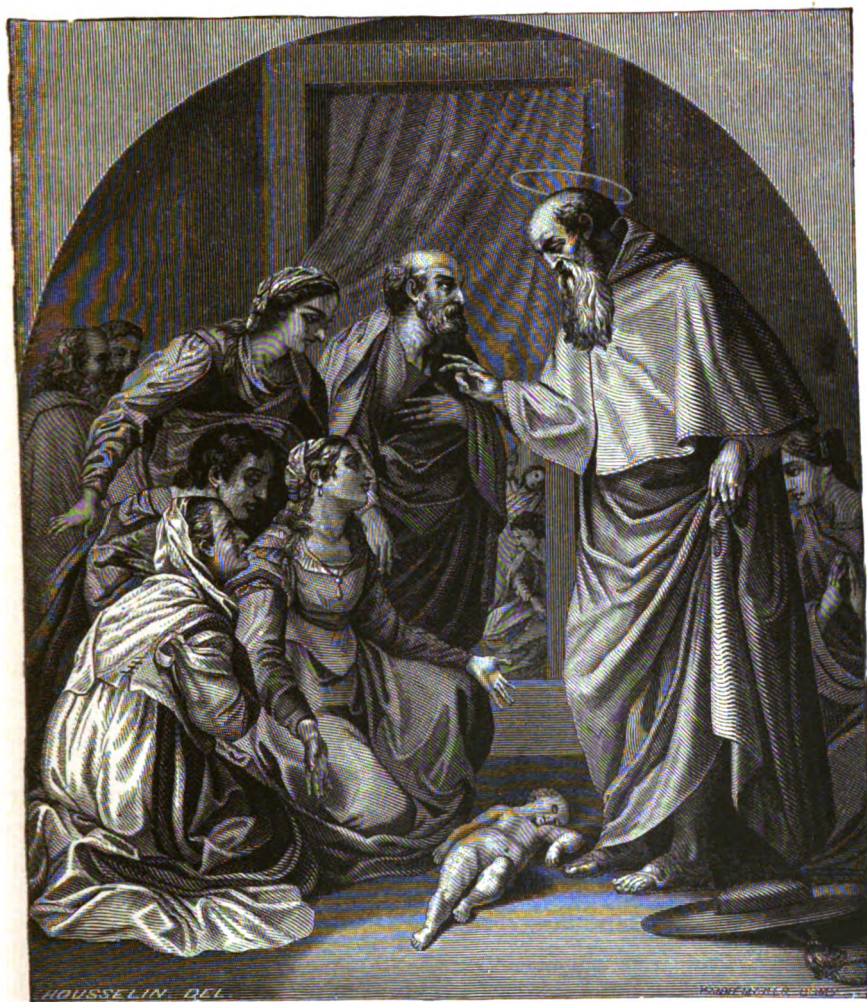
“I ought to give thanks to you, Abba, my Father, for all that you have done for me,” says St. Jerome. “I say always: ‘Praised be the Most High!’ I recognize that I suffer much less than I deserve. My sins are small in comparison with my sins.”

THE NINE DAY OF JULY.

BISHOP AND CARDINAL

Francesco, the first of the Bonaccis, was born in 1221, at Bad
 Fiesole, in the district of Tuscany. His parents were very dis-
 tinguished, not only on account of their nobility and
 wealth, but also for their piety and virtues. When
 the child was a few months old, he became dangerously sick,
 and his parents were at his death. His mother appealed to
 the Virgin Mary, who was then living at that period, beg-
 ging her to spare her son's life from God. She
 answered that she would, if the child might, and in-
 stantly directed him to turn to his divine ser-
 vant, St. Francis. The latter prayed for
 the child, and he was saved. In regard to this
 event, the legend says, "la Venuta;" which means,
 the coming, for that time they called the child so
 because of the appearance, although at the baptismal
 ceremony he was called Francesco.

When reason awakens, Bonaventure, who had been made in regard to him and his family into the Order of St. Francis, and whose profession he went to Paris to devote himself to. His progress in learning was as great as his advancement in humility; constant self-denial, and a great love of his crucified Lord, and of the blessed Sacrament. He meditated daily on the sufferings of Christ, and spent as much time as he could in the blessed Sacrament. He seldom spoke of himself, especially when he himself said Mass, or preached. His innocence he preserved to the end. Doctor Alexander of Hales, understanding his character, used to say, that it seemed to him that he had never sinned in Adam; so strictly did he



SAINT BONAVENTURE.

control his inclinations, so great were his virtue and his piety. Before he was thirty years old, his superiors appointed him to teach theology in the University of Paris, which he did with immense success. There he and St. Thomas of Aquin received the title of "Doctor," the highest dignity conferred upon Theologians. At the age of 35 years, he was elected General of the whole Seraphic Order, and his election was confirmed by Pope Alexander, who had presided over the assembly. When once installed in his new functions, he was as zealous to preserve the rule of the holy Founder, as he had previously been earnest in declining the dignity. He made the most wholesome regulations, and led all those under him by word and example to great sanctity. During eighteen years he administered his office, with so much wisdom, mildness and strength of character, that he was loved and esteemed by all, and venerated as the second Founder of the Order.

Although occupied with such constant and important labors, he never neglected his devotional exercises or his studies. We possess this day a great many theological works of great learning written by this holy man. Among others, he wrote a book to refute those who slandered the Mendicant Orders, which he entitled: "A Defense of the Poor." He proves in this book the temporal as well as spiritual benefits of such orders. He also wrote several most learned and eloquent books in praise of the Blessed Virgin, whose honor he desired to further to the best of his ability, and whom, from childhood, he had greatly venerated. There is also extant from his pen, the life of St. Francis, Founder of the Seraphic Order. Whilst he was writing this work, St. Thomas Aquinas came to pay him a visit. Hearing in what Bonaventure was occupied, he declined disturbing him, and left with the words: "Let us leave one Saint to work for another." St. Thomas so highly esteemed Bonaventure, that he did not hesitate to call him a Saint while he was still alive. This holy man was greatly astonished that Bonaventure, being so much occupied with his duties, yet found time to write so many books of such profound learning, and one day asked him where his library was. Bonaventure pointing to a crucifix, said: "This is the library, wherein I find all that I teach to others." Before he began to study, or whenever a doubt or a difficulty during study embarrassed him, he fell down before the Crucifix and humbly prayed for Divine assistance. He said more than once, that by this means, he had obtained more knowledge and wisdom than by all his industry. Not content with all this, the holy man preached publicly in all the places which he visited in the exercise of his functions, exhorting sinners to repentance and the pious to be

constant in good works ; by which he converted, in a most remarkable manner, the most hardened sinners.

The fame of his great knowledge and holiness, which spread all over the country, was of great benefit to him in his missionary work ; whence he received the title of Seraphic Doctor, by which he is still known in our days. Bishops and prelates of the Church honored the Saint still more than other people of a lower degree. Clement IV, desired to reward him for his many services to the Church with the Archbishopric of York ; but the holy man throwing himself at his feet, begged so earnestly to be spared the burden of this honor, that the Holy Father acceded to his request. After the death of this Pope, the Cardinals, assembled at Viterbo, could not agree in the election of a new head of the Church, and they at last determined to leave the choice to Bonaventure, promising to accept as Pope, whomsoever he thought deserving to receive the highest of earthly dignities. This was surely the greatest sign of honor which they could confer upon the Saint. Bonaventure, after having prayed to God, said that, in his opinion, Theobald, archdeacon of Liège, who was not even present, was most worthy to be raised to the Pontifical Throne. The cardinals received his decision and Theobald became the head of Christ's Church. This Pope, who took the name of Gregory X, sent afterwards the hat and insignia of a Cardinal to Bonaventure, nominating him Bishop of Albano, and commanding him at the same time, to obey without any opposition. The papal Nuncios who were to convey this news to the Saint, found him occupied in washing the dishes in the kitchen. He listened with unfeigned surprise to their message, and as he saw that, this time, there was no escape left, he obediently submitted, but nevertheless he finished his humble occupation. The Pope, calling him to Rome, took him to Lyons where a general Council was held, during which he gave new proofs of his great learning, and of his unwearied zeal in promoting the welfare of the holy Church. It pleased the Almighty, to call His faithful servant, in the midst of his pious labor, and after a short illness, to receive his eternal reward. He died in 1274, only fifty-three years of age. The Pope and all the bishops deeply lamented his early death, but God immediately honored him by many miracles. One hundred and sixty years later, when on account of the erection of a new Church, the relics of the Saint were exhumed, it was found that the flesh of the body was entirely consumed, the head excepted, of which the hair, teeth, tongue, eyes and ears, lips and cheeks, were as perfect as though he had still been living. The head, therefore, was preserved in a rich shrine, and the rest of the body laid into

a coffin. After many years, when the Huguenots or Calvinists took possession of Lyons, they publicly burned the body of the Saint and threw the ashes into the river. The holy head, however, was saved from their rage by the care of a priest, who, though most cruelly tortured, to make him confess where the relic was kept, preferred to bear the suffering rather than reveal where the precious treasure was concealed.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The love and devotion of St. Bonaventure to the passion and death of our Lord was great beyond description. He meditated upon them daily. The crucifix was continually before his eyes, and before it he said his prayers, either prostrate on the ground or on bended knees. I hope that you are not among those who are ashamed to keep an image of Christ in their room: as in that case I must remind you of the saying of our Lord, that, on the judgment-day He will be ashamed of those who on earth are ashamed of Him. I will suppose, therefore, that you have a crucifix in your room, but why do you so seldom prostrate yourself before it? Why do you so seldom meditate on the passion and death of the Saviour? Is this a sign of love and gratitude towards Him? If any human being had suffered, for love of you, only half what Christ the Lord suffered; or if he perhaps had died to save you from death, how would you feel towards him? And why have you not the same feelings towards your Redeemer? Endeavor, at least, to show greater love for Him in future. Let no day pass without praying before the crucifix; raise your eyes to it sometimes during the day, and manifest, by short prayers and pious ejaculations, your love and devotion towards your suffering Saviour; as for example: "With my whole heart I love Thee, O Jesus, and it is bitter grief to me that I have offended Thee, O merciful God!" Or.

"Cleanse my soul with Thy precious blood." Or, "Jesus Christ, who didst die for me upon the cross, have mercy on me!" &c.

II. St. Bonaventure very seldom received holy Communion or said Mass, without shedding tears. Love to the Saviour in the most holy sacrament thus moved his heart. How great is your devotion and love to the Blessed Sacrament, especially at the time when you receive it? How much time do you give to prayer before and after holy Communion? Do you purify your soul from every stain by a sincere confession? Do you adorn it with virtues, that it may be a worthy dwelling for so great a guest as the only Son of the Almighty? Do you appear with due reverence at the table of the Lord? How much time do you give to thanksgiving after your dear Saviour has come to you, and what is your devotion during the same? Examine yourself on these points, and correct yourself where you have been negligent. Before all things, however, take care that you never receive your Lord while in mortal sin. "For" says St. James of Nisibis, "this is a crime that cannot be excused;" a crime, the wickedness of which is so great, that it deserves no pardon, when committed voluntarily, as it offends Christ our Lord above all others. You know, you believe that He whom you receive is not only your Saviour, but also your Judge, who has power to condemn you. Before Him you will soon appear to receive

your sentence for all Eternity. How dare you, therefore, receive Him unworthily, when you know that you thus draw upon yourself the wrath of your Judge, and render yourself deserving of everlasting punishment? Is there any crime, any blasphemy, which can be compared with this? And does there exist a punishment great enough to atone for so horrible an offence towards our dear Lord? "Wo to him, eternal wo, who dares to go unworthily to the table of the Lord," says the venerable Bede.

"Judas, the traitor, was the first to go to Holy Communion in mortal sin. What happened to him is known to you. At the moment he committed the sacrilege, the devil took possession of him, and incited him to betray his Lord. Guard yourself that you may not imitate his wickedness; otherwise you will receive the same punishment. "Let no one dare to approach the table of the Lord like Judas," says St. Chrysostom.

FIFTEENTH DAY OF JULY.

ST. HENRY, EMPEROR.

Among the Roman Emperors there is one whom the Catholic Church mentions, as well in the Martyrology as in holy Mass and the breviary, as a Saint; the Emperor Henry. He was the son of the Duke of Bavaria, and received instruction in the Christian religion, and also in the liberal arts, under St. Wolfgang. This holy teacher inculcated not only piety, but also holiness, as is proved by the Emperor's whole after-life. The early death of his holy tutor was a source of deep grief to the pious youth, and he spent many an hour at his grave, confiding all his cares to him with the confidence of a child. One day, while he was thus praying, sleep overtook him, during which he saw the holy bishop standing before him, telling him to turn his eyes to the wall. On doing so, he saw distinctly the two words "After Six." He awoke, and thinking he should die after six days, he prepared himself piously for his departure from this life. The six days, however, passed, and as he was still alive, he thought that perhaps six weeks had been intended by those words. But these also went by, and in like manner six months and six years, during all of which he lived so piously that he was constantly ready to die. When, however, at the expiration of six years, he was chosen Emperor, he comprehended the import of those two words. Before he was crowned Emperor, he followed the wishes of his parents and married Cunegunda, daughter of the Palatine Siegfried, with whom, by mutual consent, he lived in perpetual chastity. Having attained the highest

dignity that could be conferred upon him, he altered not in the least his pious manner of living. He united with his dignity, a most edifying humility, as he had accepted the imperial crown only with the intention of furthering the honor of God, of protecting and disseminating the true faith, and of laboring for the welfare of his subjects. During his reign of 22 years, he was often in the field, sometimes in one country, sometimes in another; at first against those who aspired to the throne, and then against the persecutors of the Church, or the rebels and enemies of the Empire. He was most miraculously assisted by God and obtained many glorious victories over his enemies. We will give one example as a proof of this. Several barbarous nations of Sclavonia and other neighboring territories made inroads into some portions of the Empire, doing great damage to the inhabitants and sparing neither churches nor convents, but plundering and laying waste everything in their way. They ravaged the diocese of Merseburg, and the holy emperor, advised by the nobles of the land, marched against them. Girding around his loins the sword of the holy Martyr St. Adrian, he called on the Lord of Hosts to be with him, and then begged his holy patrons, especially the holy Archangel Michael, St. Gregory and St. Adrian to intercede for him. He further promised to St. Lawrence, the patron of the See of Merseburg, to renew the church that had been dedicated to him, and which had been destroyed by the idolatrous people, if he would obtain from God the grace to vanquish them. His whole army was prepared for the battle, by receiving the Holy Communion, and when the morning broke, the Emperor beheld the barbarians marching against him in immense masses. Having again called on God for aid, he encouraged his soldiers to fight bravely against the enemies of the country and religion. When the battle began, the holy Emperor perceived those Saints whose aid had been invoked, at the head of his army, strengthening his soldiers and causing such panic among the enemy, that most of them fled and others turned in wild rage against each other. Thus did the Almighty renew the miracle, which, in ancient times, He had wrought for the benefit of His people, and the holy Emperor won a complete victory for which he gave due thanks to heaven and fulfilled the promise made in honor of St. Lawrence. Valiantly as the holy Emperor marched against the enemies of his land and the Holy Church, on this occasion, he was equally ready, at other times, to spare those who humbled themselves and requested peace. The inhabitants of Troja in Calabria had rebelled against the general of the Emperor, and the latter was obliged to punish them for it, in order to prevent others from following their ex-

ample. Hence he besieged Troja with his army. When the inhabitants saw that they could not oppose the imperial power, they sent all the children in a long procession to the Emperor, crying "Lord, have mercy." So touching a cry, accompanied by floods of tears, went to the Emperor's heart, and withdrawing his army, he announced to the people of the city his pardon, with the words, that it would be wrong for him, as a man, to disregard prayers and tears which oftentimes moved even God. Surely a beautiful example of Christian charity, far from all desire to seek revenge on those who gave offence. The same charity actuated the holy Emperor to assist the poor and needy, and to stretch forth his hand to help the oppressed. His love to the Almighty he manifested especially by his zeal to further His honor on all occasions. To this end he erected many magnificent churches and convents, on which he spent large sums of money. There can hardly be named a monarch, who renewed and erected so many churches, endowed so many dioceses, and founded so many convents as this holy Emperor. He founded the diocese of Bamberg and endowed it most generously. In the city of Bamberg, he built, in honor of the holy Archangel Michael, a church on the site still called Mount-Michael, another dedicated to St. Stephen, and also the magnificent Cathedral. The last was consecrated by the Pope himself, with great solemnity. The same Pope, Benedict VIII., crowned Henry and Cunegunda at Rome, on which occasion he presented the Emperor with a golden ball—the imperial globe—surmounted by the cross. This precious gift, as also the crown placed on his head at Rome, the Emperor, on his return, bestowed on the Church of the monastery at Cluni, to which he paid a pious visit. Notwithstanding his being engaged in frequent wars, which devoured enormous sums of money, he bestowed great treasure on the churches to procure everything that was necessary to ornament them. He wished to see the churches and everything belonging to the divine service magnificent, and kept in proper order, and used to say: "The Lord, to whom these churches are consecrated, is so great, that we ought to do all in our power to worship and proclaim His greatness and majesty. Nothing is laid out uselessly that is given to this end, nay, we never can ornament our churches so much that there will be no room left to do still more." The holy Emperor desired in this respect to imitate the Emperor Constantine the Great, who was celebrated through the whole Christian world, not only for the many grand churches that he erected, but also for the splendid vessels, candelabra, paintings and vestments with which he furnished and ornamented them; for the same reason which actuated King Solomon

to gather an almost inconceivable amount of gold and silver for the building of the Temple. "For," said he, "we do not erect a dwelling for man, but for God."

Besides these and other works, which the holy Emperor undertook for the welfare of the empire, and the honor of the Holy Church, he did not neglect those exercises of piety which he needed for his own salvation. He had certain hours both of the day and of the night, which he gave to prayer. He undertook nothing without first asking the assistance of the Almighty by prayer. During many bitter persecutions which he had to suffer, even from his own brother, his patience was most remarkable; a word of complaint was never heard to pass his lips. In like manner he bore the most cruel pains occasioned by sickness, until St. Benedict, who visibly appeared to him during his sleep, cured him. He mortified his body with rigorous fasts and other penances. He received frequently, and always with great devotion, the Holy Sacrament, and by this means preserved his chastity until the end of his life.

After so virtuous a life he became sick at the Castle of Grone, not far from Halberstadt, while on a journey. After receiving the Viaticum, he called his holy consort, Cunegunda and her relations around his dying bed, and after once again asking her to forgive him, for having once suspected her of evil deeds, as is related in the life of this holy Empress, on the third day of March, he took her hand and said to her relations, in the presence of many persons: "She was entrusted to me by you, or rather by Christ our Lord, and I give her back to Christ and to you, a pure virgin." Soon after, he expired, in the year 1024, and the 52d of his age. It was the will of God that the holy Emperor should reveal, with his last words, the life of unviolated chastity which he and his consort had led; as until then it had been a secret. His relics were entombed at Bamberg, in the Cathedral erected by him, where they are greatly venerated at the present day. The many miracles, which have taken place at his tomb, induced Pope Eugenius III., to canonize him in the year 1152.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. The holy Emperor Henry expended large sums in ornamenting the churches and in providing them with splendid vessels and vestments to be used in the sacred service. He could truthfully say with the pious King David: "I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of thy</p>	<p>house, and the place where thy glory dwelleth." (Psalm xxv.) Why he did this has been explained, and there can be no doubt, that in doing so, he acted in a holy and praiseworthy manner. What then shall be said of those who employ the abundance of their means, in immor-</p>
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crately adorning their own luxurious dwellings, in gaudy dresses, in maintaining useless animals, or in vain and even sinful amusements? What shall be said of those who, not only contribute nothing to the ornament of a church, but, like the heretics, speak against it, as though it were superfluous, unnecessary or unsuitable? Just as if God had been wrong when He ordained an infinitely more costly adornment for the Temple of Jerusalem, than can be found in our time in any Church of the Christian world! What of those who even try to prevent others from contributing to the decoration of a Church, or to the maintenance of devotion? What of those who declare invalid all donations, bequests and endowments made to this end, and who say that it would be much better if the money were given to the poor, or used for hospitals? Do they not think and speak like Judas, who murmured against the costly spices with which Mary Magdalene anointed the Saviour? In his estimation this was extravagance, and the spices ought to be sold, and the money given to the poor. He, however, as the Gospel testifies, cared not for the poor, but would himself have had some of the money which the spices would have brought. The same is the case with those of whom I spoke. What is used to embellish the churches is wasted: it ought to be given to the poor: but what is used in gaming, debauchery, luxurious banquets and garments, is not wasted, and ought not to be given to the poor. If great bequests or donations are made to them, it is all valid, and the poor are not thought of; but if the Church is benefited in this manner, it is all wrong, and must be the result of exaggerated piety, or the work of a greedy, crafty priest; then great injustice is done to the heirs; the bequest or donation must be invalid, and the poor

are forthwith remembered! Oh! you hypocrites! Oh! you true followers of Judas! If you are so concerned about the poor, why do you not begin to assist them yourselves, as generously as you are able to do? It is in truth a pity that you did not live under the Old Testament, when the Lord commanded a magnificent Temple to be erected and decorated most sumptuously. I believe you would even then have remarked that it would be much wiser to bestow the money on the poor. And if you had been present when the poor widow put her two mites into the treasury, I believe you would have blamed her, saying, that she would have done much better, by using it for herself or for other poor. But Christ Himself praised the pious widow, as is seen in the Gospel (Mark xii.). Hence, who shall dare to blame her or others who act in a similar manner? There will come a day when it will be made manifest who derived the greatest comfort, joy and benefit from his temporal possessions, he who used them for the maintenance and embellishment of the Church, or he who squandered them frivolously, uselessly, or perhaps sinfully; or he who hoarded them as a miser. A true Christian, who is himself unable to contribute to the maintenance or decoration of the Church, does not prevent others from so doing: he does not speak against such pious gifts, but rejoices in the thought that God is thus honored.

The above does not intimate that the poor should be neglected. We have often in this work, exhorted our readers to be generous to them. We now refer to those only who make a pretext of the poor, to blame the maintenance and decoration of the Church. The instruction of Our Lord Jesus Christ, which He gave on one occasion, is all that is here needed: "These things you

ought to have done, and not have left those undone." (Matth. xxiii.)

II. St. Henry prepared himself, first for six days, then six weeks, then six months, and finally, six years for death, as he looked upon the above mentioned words, "After six," as an announcement of his approaching end. He acted rightly; for, when death is concerned, no preparation can be too thorough, as our eternity depends upon it. Have you still to live six years, six months, six weeks, six days? You know not. You are not even assured of six hours; for, the same faith which teaches you that death is certain, teaches you also that the time, manner and place of it are unknown. Can you believe this, and yet defer to prepare yourself for your departure from this world? Of course you promise to yourself that you will live many years to come: but how can you promise yourself what is not at all in your

power? Has the Almighty, who alone is Lord over time, life and death, assured you on this point? Have there not been many deceived who, like yourself, flattered themselves with the hope of a long life? But even should you still live many years, do you suppose that you would regret having prepared yourself for death, by penance and a Christian life, though you were spared to live longer? St. Henry certainly did not regret it. How many thousands suffer in hell, and regret eternally, that deceived by the hope of a long life, they postponed preparing themselves for death. Taken away suddenly in their sins, they have gone to everlasting destruction. Whom, then, will you follow, these unhappy ones, or St. Henry? "Reform your lives, and prepare yourselves early for death, because the end of our days is unknown." This admonition comes to us from St. Augustine.

THE SIXTEENTH DAY OF JULY.

THE FESTIVAL OF OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL

Carmel is a mountain, lying between Judea and Syria, of which one part belonged to the tribe of Manasses, the other to the tribe of Aser. The prophet Elias wrought, on Mount Carmel, the great miracle which is circumstantially related in the third Book of Kings, 18th chapter, when he, to prove that the God of Israel, whom he worshipped, was the true God, called down fire from heaven to consume his sacrifice. Upon this mountain, according to the Breviary, some pious nun, who had been converted to Christianity, built a church or chapel, dedicated to the Most Pure Virgin, in which they frequently assembled for prayer; and they were called "Brothers of our Lady of Mount Carmel." There exists, at the present day, in the Catholic Church, a celebrated religious Order, whose members take their name from this mount, and hence are called "Carmelites," or "Brothers of our Lady of Mount Carmel." This

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religious Order was spread many centuries ago, not only in the Holy Land, but also in other countries. Among other things we read that St. Louis of France, on his return from Syria, brought some of these religious with him into his kingdom, and assigned them a dwelling near Marseilles. The Holy Mother who was especially honored by these religious, imparted also especial graces to them, and protected them miraculously in the greatest need and danger. Among these graces is to be counted the following:—The holy man, Simon Stock, who had, during many years served the Lord in England, as a hermit, desired most fervently to be admitted into the Carmelite Order, when he heard that the latter were spreading all over Europe. His desire was complied with, and he endeavoured with such zeal to reach the height of perfection, that after a few years he was deemed worthy to be chosen general of the whole Order. As such, he one day poured out his whole heart, with child-like confidence, before an image of the Blessed Virgin, requesting her to bestow upon his holy Order some especial favor. The Divine Mother appeared to him, and, as it is said in the Roman Breviary, bestowed upon him the habit of the holy scapular, that his Order might be thus distinguished, from all others and protected from all evil. Swanington, the companion of the blessed man, relates that Simon informed him of the apparition in the following words:—"The Blessed Virgin appeared to me with a large suite; she held the habit in her hand and said, 'This shall be thy privilege and that of all Carmelites. Those who die, with sorrow for their sins and in the true faith, and clad in this habit, shall not suffer eternal fire.'" Others say that the Divine Mother bestowed the scapular upon the blessed man with these words: "Take, my son, this scapular, as a sign of thy Order, an emblem of salvation. They who die in it, repenting of their sins, shall not suffer the eternal fire." This consoling apparition and promise gave rise to the confraternity of the scapular, which is now spread over the whole of the Catholic world, with the papal approbation and the grant of many indulgences. It is a consoling belief, which rests upon the words of the Breviary, that the members of this association, who endeavor to live according to its rules, enjoy the special protection of the Blessed Virgin at the hour of death, and are speedily delivered from purgatory, and taken into their heavenly home. Pope Benedict XIV. treating of the Festivals of the Blessed Virgin, says that Paul V. had made a decree, by which he sanctioned the pious belief that the Blessed Virgin would help her clients after death, by her intercession, especially on Saturdays, as this day is consecrated to her by the Holy Church, provided they had died in the grace of God, and had

endeavored to follow the rules of the association. The heretics at different periods attacked this pious belief with lies and blasphemies, and ridiculed those who wore the blessed scapular; nor have they discontinued to do this in our day. Some Catholics, though Catholics only in name, agree with them, and reject the revelation of Simon Stock, as a pious fable, or a tale without any foundation. They look upon the promise made to him as something which does not harmonize with the Catholic faith; they are not even ashamed to say that it opens a path to evil; for, if we thought that we can escape hell by wearing a scapular, nothing would be more likely than that we should plunge into all possible vices and continue in them, in the belief that we cannot go to eternal destruction, by reason of our being members of that association. To this and other such reasonings I will answer only this: As far as the comforting revelation of the blessed Simon Stock is concerned, it is, of course, not an article of faith, as those contained in Holy Writ; but it is not, therefore, only a fable or unfounded tale. It was related by trustworthy men, examined by many historians, and verified by several Popes. Those who doubt it, or denounce it as false, without sufficient cause, act unreasonably. There are thousands of facts, not contained in Holy Writ, which are incontestible on account of the testimony of trustworthy men. Among this number is the one above related. And if, notwithstanding this, a heretic thinks it a fable or an unfounded tale, let him give his reasons for rejecting it; for, a mere contradiction of a fact does not refute it. Respecting the gracious promise of the Blessed Virgin, that he who wears the habit, or blessed scapular, shall escape the fire of hell, it is beyond all doubt that we cannot understand it in such a manner that every one shall most certainly escape the fire of hell and go to heaven, simply because he wears a scapular, no matter how vicious his conduct might be. No, those who would judge in the sense of the Catholic Church, are not allowed to understand the promise in this manner. For, not to mention that, according to the teachings of the Holy Church, we cannot possess in this world, without a divine revelation, an infallible assurance of our future salvation, the Gospel of our Lord declares plainly that to escape hell and gain salvation much more is necessary than the wearing of a scapular. True faith, holy baptism, strict observance of the commandments of God and of the Church, the avoidance of sin, the practice of good works, and, finally penance when we have committed sin; these are the conditions which, according to the teachings of Christ, are necessary for our salvation, and without which all other merits, whatever they may be, are not sufficient to open for us the gates of

heaven. To elucidate the case before us still more, let us suppose that some one, either out of pious simplicity or want of instruction, carried constantly a consecrated Host with him. Now the question arises, will this person escape hell on account of it and surely gain salvation? Can he, because he carries a consecrated Host with him, not commit a mortal sin? Can he, for the same reason, not die in sin and be condemned? From the answer that must necessarily follow, we may draw the conclusion, that the words of the above promise are not to be understood as if every one who wears a scapular must surely be saved, and cannot be condemned, notwithstanding his living a bad life. Just in the same manner are some of the words of Holy Writ to be understood, for instance, where it is said that alms free men from death, that is, from eternal damnation. God, in consideration of alms, gives especial graces to man, in order that he may avoid sin, do penance, and hence not go to destruction. In the same manner, any one who, out of veneration to the Queen of Heaven, wears the scapular, and carefully observes the rules of the association, will, by her intercession, receive the grace to live piously, to escape hell, and to gain heaven. In one word, to wear the scapular, and by so doing to manifest an especial devotion to the Blessed Virgin, will assist us to gain life everlasting. But it is far from being sufficient to open heaven for us, if it is not accompanied by those means which Christ announced as necessary for the salvation of our souls. The above is surely a proof that devotion to the scapular in no way leads to a wicked life, as the heretics pretend. No Catholic has ever thought of teaching that we gain heaven by merely wearing the scapular; while it is quite certain that the doctrines of heresy lead straightway to sin and vice. For, if any man believes, according to the teachings of the heretics, that faith alone saves, that he is sure of salvation and cannot lose it, if he only believes; or that no transgression of the Commandments can harm him, if he only accepts with a believing mind the grace of Christ, as the catechism of Calvinists teaches; what can follow but that he should plunge into sin and vice, partly because, according to his ideas, he cannot be condemned, partly on account of his wrong opinion, that faith alone saves. The Catholic Church is far from such doctrines. She does not teach that the wearing of a scapular, or any similar observance, is sufficient for our salvation, but that the wearing of a scapular, if it is done piously, assists us to gain salvation, as God, in consequence of it, will bestow upon us many graces through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, which otherwise He might not grant. The Evil One, who knows the great benefits which result from all pious associations,

and especially from the veneration of the Mother of our Lord, incites the heretics to reject or to blaspheme them. He also incites Catholics to place more faith in them than they ought to do, and to pay more attention to what is merely an aid than to what is really necessary. Thus it happens that many think it a greater sin to eat meat on Wednesday, which is forbidden by the rules of the association of the scapular, than to eat meat on the days of abstinence commanded by the Church. A true Catholic ought first to obey the commandment of God, or of the Church, and do all that is absolutely necessary to gain salvation, and after this, what is useful and beneficial. That which aids him to gain salvation he should not neglect, but at the same time he should be careful not to think that he will gain heaven if he omits that which is most needful. Let this suffice for your instruction, and to refute the wicked and the ignorant.

In conclusion, as far as the use of the scapular is concerned, it would be very wrong for a Catholic to despise it. He should, on the contrary, learn to esteem it highly. We find, in many books, instances of miracles which have been wrought on those who have worn it piously. They have been miraculously protected in dangers by fire and water; in battle it has been a shield which averted the strokes of the enemy; in sickness, a life-giving remedy. And who can count the number of hardened sinners, for whom the Divine Mother has obtained grace to do penance, and thus to escape hell, in consideration of the devotion which they manifested to her by wearing the scapular? Hence, whether you are numbered among the sinners or the righteous, let the beneficial use of the scapular be recommended to you. Evince, by wearing it, your devotion towards her who faithfully aids her children in life and in death.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. To escape hell and gain salvation ought to be the end and aim of all our devotions, of all our actions. You must then employ those means which are indispensable to save your soul and to escape hell. These are: Keeping the true faith; observing the commandments of God and of the Church; worthily receiving the sacraments; avoiding sin; doing penance and other good works; and practicing patience in trials and suffering. If you neglect these means, then everything else is insufficient to lead you to heaven,

or save you from eternal destruction. For this reason it is necessary that you prefer the good works commanded by God and the Church to those which are voluntary. It is according to the teachings of the heretics not to do any good works that are not commanded by God: and that those good works which one does voluntarily are not pleasing in the sight of the Lord. But on the other hand, it is also a deceit of the wicked enemy of man, if we practice only voluntary good works, and leave undone those which are commanded

us, or if we rather do the former than the latter. Those which are commanded have always to precede the others, and we must be much more careful in practising those than all others.

II. Besides those good works which it is your duty to perform, do also others voluntarily, that is, such as you are not obliged under sin to perform, but which, in addition to the means needful for your salvation, assist you to persevere in the right path, although as previously said, they are not absolutely necessary for your salvation. With these, among many others, may be classed pious confraternities, sodalities or associations. To join them and to live according to their regulations is a voluntary good work. To join all the associations and not observe rightly the rules of one, is of little or no benefit. To join one, and strictly to follow its precepts is, in my judgment, much to be preferred. Those associations that are to be first recommended to all, are: The confraternity of the Sacred Heart

of Jesus, that of a Happy Death, and of the Blessed Virgin. Countless incidents are told which clearly prove that the Mother of Mercy has obtained especial graces for those who have been members of such associations, and who have venerated her and called to her for aid. Many sinners have been converted by such voluntary devotions, many pious persons strengthened to do right: hence, many have escaped hell, and have attained the kingdom of God, which might not have been the case had they omitted this voluntary devotion. Be, therefore, a zealous member of some pious association. It will afford you great comfort and benefit in your last hour. Justus Lipsius, a man famous for his great learning and virtues, said when on his death bed: "When I remember that I have been a member of the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin, and that, as such, I have endeavored to live in accordance with the prescribed regulations, I am filled with joy and confidence."

THE SEVENTEENTH DAY OF JULY.

ST. ALEXIUS, CONFESSOR.

The life of Alexius teaches us how great God is in His Saints. His parents, Euphemitianus and Aglae, were rich and distinguished people, but they were long without issue. At length, after many prayers, they were blessed with a son, whom they named Alexius. They neglected nothing to give him a pious education; and Alexius, who was always much inclined to piety, never gave them any cause for sorrow, but was their greatest happiness and comfort. When he grew older, his parents desired that he should take to wife a maiden who was highly esteemed in Rome, as well on account of her riches as of her virtues. Although Alexius had different thoughts as to the life he wished to lead, he nevertheless, after having asked God's advice in prayer, con-

sented to their wish, and the wedding was celebrated with great festivities. Alexius, however, on the same day, felt an invincible desire to leave his bride, and his home, and all his riches. He obeyed the Divine voice within him, and proceeding to the apartment of his bride, he made her most costly presents of jewels and other precious things, asking her to receive and keep them as tokens of his love. He then went into his room, and, without telling any one of his design, changed his clothes, and secretly left the house. He hastened to the harbor, and embarked in a ship which was ready to sail. After a prosperous voyage, he arrived at Laodicea, and thence went to Edessa in Syria. The consternation in Alexius' home, the grief and anxiety of his parents and pious bride, when he did not return the following day, may easily be imagined. They sent their servants in all directions to search for Alexius, and bring him back to his home, and as he could not be found anywhere in the city, messengers were dispatched to neighboring states and cities; but all was useless; they found no trace of him. Meanwhile Alexius, after visiting many remarkable places, and having made many devout pilgrimages, had arrived at Edessa, and begun the life he was resolved henceforth to lead, and which consisted in living, for the honor of God and the salvation of his soul, in voluntary poverty until his death. Hence he gave to the poor all he still possessed, covered himself with a ragged garment, and went to a church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. This house of the Almighty became, so to say, his dwelling-place, as he spent in it the whole day, except the hour for begging alms. He passed the greater part of the night in praising the Lord in the vestibule of the sacred edifice, giving only a few hours to sleep on the bare ground. He fasted most rigidly and distributed most of the alms he received among the poor. His manner of living altered the face of the Saint to such a degree that no one would have recognized him. He convinced himself of this fact by asking alms of his own servants who had come to Edessa in search of him: they gave him alms without recognizing in the miserable beggar their own master. When Alexius had lived in this manner for some time, several persons who had observed his virtuous conduct, began to think that this beggar was more than he appeared. The curate of the church, one day, while pondering over the actions of this beggar, heard a voice proceeding from an image of the Blessed Virgin, informing him that the poor man, who dwelt at the door of the church, was a great servant of the Almighty, and that his prayers were very agreeable to the Most High. This was soon known to many, and Alexius perceived that they began to honor him and treat him with distinction;

and as he had determined to live in abnegation and poverty, he resolved to leave Edessa. Accordingly, he went on board of the first vessel he found, praying God to lead him where it was His holy will that he should serve Him unknown and unheeded. His prayer was accepted; for, instead of reaching Laodicea, whither the ship was bound, it was driven into the harbor of Rome. The heroic conqueror of himself saw in this that it was the design of Providence that he should continue in his home the life he had begun at Edessa.

The Almighty, who wished to give to the world an unprecedented example of self-abnegation, inspired Alexius to go into the house of his father; and the holy youth, although willing to obey the call, went first to the seven principal churches of the city, praying God to give him strength for the terrible struggle before him. No sooner had he finished his prayers, than he went to his father's house. At that moment Euphemianus, followed by many of his servants, was coming out of his house. Alexius, clad in rags, approaching him most humbly said: "Lord, for the sake of Christ, have compassion on a poor pilgrim, and give me a corner of your palace to live in." Euphemianus looked in pity at Alexius, and although he had no idea that his son was concealed under the garments of the beggar, his heart was moved and he consented to his request. Hence he ordered his servants to assign him a place where he might live, and to give him his daily food. The order was obeyed, and a corner under the staircase, or as some say, a small room was appointed to the poor pilgrim as his dwelling. He gratefully accepted it and remained there until his death without being recognized by any one. God permitted that the servants soon grew weary of him, and often treated him with great indignity. They not only derided and abused him, but even sometimes dared to lay hands on him. The holy pilgrim bore it all without complaining. His greatest trial was when he saw his father, his mother or his bride, or when he heard from their own lips, how they were grieving for the loss of their Alexius. But the grace of God sustained him and he wavered not in his heroic resolution. He never left his corner, except when he went to church. Every week he partook of the Blessed Sacrament and passed many hours in church in prayer and devout reading. He fasted daily, slept on the bare floor, and mortified his body most unmercifully. He possessed no other pictures but those of Christ and the Blessed Virgin, the sight of which encouraged him to persevere. These were the means by which God enabled him to overcome the world, the flesh and the devil. For seventeen years he thus struggled and conquered his own heart in his father's house, when it pleased

the Almighty to bestow upon this brave and incomparable soldier, the crown of everlasting glory. The hour of his death was revealed to him, and Alexius, after having, according to his custom, assisted at Holy Mass and received the Blessed Sacrament, went home and wrote who he was, why he had left his father's house, and all that had taken place during his absence. This note he folded together and held in his hand when he peacefully and happily gave his heroic soul to God, in the year of our Lord 403, or as others say in 304.

At the hour of his death, Euphemianus, his father, was in church, assisting at the divine sacrifice, which Pope Innocent I. offered in the presence of the Emperor Honorius, when suddenly, a voice announced that the great servant of God at the house of Euphemianus was dead. The latter, questioned by the Pope and the Emperor, what servant of God dwelt in his house answered: "It can be none but the poor beggar to whom I have given lodgings for many years." Accompanied by the Pope and the Emperor, Euphemianus went home, found Alexius dead. Seeing a paper in his hand, Euphemianus would have taken it, but the fingers of the dead had closed so tightly over it, that it was not possible to loosen them. The Pope and all present fell on their knees and prayed that God would permit the paper to be read, after which the Pope approached the Saint, and took the paper without any effort. The astonishment of all, but especially of Euphemianus, the Pope and the Emperor, when they read that the beggar was the long-lost son of Euphemianus is easier to be imagined than described. Grief, surprise, joy and sorrow overwhelmed the father's heart with such force, that, for a long time, he was unable to utter a word. At last throwing himself at the feet of his holy son, he bedewed them with his tears, and broke out into piteous lamentations that he had not recognized him. Meanwhile, the mother and bride of the Saint were apprised of the startling event; and no pen can describe the scene which took place when they beheld the holy body. The report of this astonishing occurrence spread quickly through the city, and the palace of Euphemianus was soon filled with people. Every one wished to kiss, or at least to see the holy relics. Several miracles which took place, and the heavenly light with which God graced the countenance of the Saint, increased from hour to hour the crowd that came to see him. The Pope ordered that the body should be transported to the Church of St. Peter, to satisfy the people. He, as well as the Emperor, followed in the funeral procession, which was more like a triumphal march, and such as Rome had never seen before. The holy relics were, in the course of time, transferred to the church of St. Boniface; and the dwelling

of Euphemianus was converted into a church and dedicated to St. Alexius. The costly tomb which encloses the holy body has been honored with many and great miracles.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. To gain heaven, St. Alexius left his home, with all its riches, pleasures and comforts, and lived an abject, despised and austere life. He was earnest in his desire to save his soul; hence nothing was too hard for him. What are you doing to save your soul? You desire to live in pleasures, honors, riches and comforts: you even seek sinful gratifications. You procure for your body all it desires, you will not be deprived of anything, you avoid all that is troublesome and do not wish to suffer or labor to obtain heaven. But nevertheless you desire to reach the same heaven into which St. Alexius has entered. Is this reasonable? It is true, God does not require of you all that this Saint did; but it is also true that we must conquer ourselves if we will gain salvation; that we must labor and suffer, avoid sin and sinful pleasures, do penance and good works, if we will enter the kingdom of God. How dare you hope to gain salvation, if you will not do this? If you tell me, as many others have said: "Heaven is intended for men;" I shall say to you: "Yes, Heaven is intended for men; but not for sinners and

idle servants, who will neither mortify themselves nor do good works."

II. To leave home, honors and riches, and to lead a life of poverty and austerity, was undoubtedly a heroic deed of St. Alexius; but infinitely greater was the heroism which made him continue, during so many years in his father's house, his life of austere self-abnegation, amid such severe temptations of Satan and persecutions of men. But man is strong when the grace of God is within him. You sometimes make the resolution to begin to labor and suffer for heaven. You, so to say, promise to do and suffer everything to gain salvation. But why is your zeal so short-lived? Why do you so soon change your mind? Ah! It is not enough to begin; you must continue until the end, otherwise it is unavailing. If Satan, or the world would prevent you, fight bravely, as St. Alexius did, and pray for strength from the Almighty. "Vain are our good deeds," writes St. Gregory the Great, "if we discontinue them before our life is ended: just as he has run to no purpose, who ceases his course before he has arrived at the goal."

THE EIGHTEENTH DAY OF JULY.

ST. SYMPHOROSA AND HER SEVEN SONS, MARTYRS; AND ST. FREDERIC, BISHOP AND MARTYR.

The Catholic Church presents to us to-day, as she did on the 10th of this Month, seven Christian heroes, who in their

youth, manifested more than manly firmness in the confession of the true faith. Their names were, Crescentius, Julianus, Nemesius, Primitivus, Justinus, Stacteus, and Eugenius. Symphorosa, their holy and not less heroic mother, was a native of Rome, and wife of Getulius, a Roman general. When in the reign of the Emperor Adrian, a cruel persecution of the Christians arose, she went with Getulius and Amantius, her brother-in-law, and her seven sons, to Tivoli, to strengthen the Christians in the true faith, and to prepare herself for the approaching struggle. The Emperor, informed of this, despatched Cerealis, one of his officers, to Tivoli, to take Getulius and Amantius, and bring them prisoners to Rome. Cerealis, still a heathen, came to execute the imperial command; but convinced by Getulius and Amantius of the truth of the Christian faith, he embraced it; and hence, all three were beheaded by command of the enraged Emperor, after having suffered a long imprisonment, and many cruel tortures.

St. Symphorosa had every reason to believe that she and her children would not long remain unmolested; and as she feared that one or more of her children, owing to their tender age, might be induced to abandon their faith for fear of the tortures, she left Tivoli, and concealed herself for a time in an unfrequented place, in order to gain time to inspire her children with Christian fortitude. She represented to them the priceless grace of dying for Christ's sake, and the glory which awaits martyrs in heaven. The shortness of the pains of martyrdom, and the never-ending rewards of heaven were the chief points which she almost hourly presented to their consideration, while, at the same time, she exhorted them to follow the example of their uncle and their father, and remain faithful to the true faith. One day, she asked Eugenius, the youngest, what he would do in case he were forced either to sacrifice to the gods, or to be whipped and torn with scourges. The innocent little child answered manfully: "Dear mother, I would rather be torn in pieces than sacrifice to the devils." "But," said his mother, addressing all the children, "would you not be frightened if the executioner would seize you, threatening to kill you all most cruelly? Would you not shrink, if they were to place before your eyes fire, swords, the rack, and other instruments of torture? Oh! I fear, my beloved children, I fear that you would lose courage and forsake Christ." "No, no, dear mother," said Crescentius, "fear not; I, and all my brothers promise to thee that there shall be nothing dreadful enough to conquer us and cause us to become faithless to Jesus Christ." Greatly comforted, the pious mother admonished them to pray that God

might give them the strength they needed to suffer for Him; a prayer which she herself ceaselessly sent up to the throne of the Most High.

Not long after, her anticipations were realized. Adrian had her and her children apprehended and brought before him, and commanded them immediately to sacrifice to the gods, or to prepare themselves for a most cruel death. The fearless heroine replied: "There is no need of further preparations, of further consideration. My resolution is taken; I will not sacrifice to idols, and I have only one wish, to give my life for Him who has given His for me." The tyrant, who had not expected this answer, was doubly enraged, and commanded her to be taken to the temple of the idols, and to be hung up by the hair of the head, after having been most cruelly buffeted. This command was immediately executed. Symphorosa, during this torture, courageously said to her children: "Be not terrified, my children, at my sufferings; I bear it joyfully; joyfully do I give my life for Christ's sake. Remain steadfast. Fight bravely. Remember the example your father gave you; look at me, your mother, and follow in our footsteps. This suffering is short, but the glory prepared for us will be everlasting." With such words, the christian mother fortified her children who were willing to conduct themselves according to her precepts. The tyrant who would no longer listen to Symphorosa's exhortations, ordered her to be cast into the river, with a great stone fastened around her neck. In this manner ended her glorious martyrdom, in the 138th year of the Christian Era.

On the following day, her seven sons were brought before the Emperor, who represented to them that, as they had neither father nor mother, he would adopt them as his own children and provide for them most bountifully, if they would obey him and sacrifice to the gods. Should they, however, prove as obstinate as their parents had been, they had nothing to expect but torments and death. "This is what we desire," answered Crescentius, "that we, like our parents, may die for the sake of Christ. Neither promises, nor threats, nor torments can make us faithless to Christ." The Emperor, being unwilling to put his menaces immediately into execution, still endeavored to win over the children, alternately by promises and threats; but finding all unavailing, he ordered seven stakes to be raised in the idolatrous temple, to which the seven valiant confessors of Christ were tied, and tormented in all possible ways. Their limbs were stretched until they were dislocated, and the witnesses of these awful scenes were filled with compassion. The pain must have been most dreadful; but there was not one of these young he-

roes who did not praise God, and rejoice in his suffering. The tyrant, ashamed of being conquered by children, ordered an end to be made of their torments, which was accordingly done in various ways. Crescentius had his throat cut with a dagger; Julianus was stabbed in the breast with a sword; Nemesisius was pierced through the heart, and Primitivus through the lower part of his body. Justinus was cut in pieces; Stacteus shot with arrows, and Eugenius, the youngest, was cut in two.

Thus gloriously died the seven sons of St. Symphorosa, reminding us of the illustrious martyrdom of the several Machabees, in the reign of the wicked King Antiochus.



This day is also the feast of the holy Bishop and martyr, St. Frederic. He was born in Friesland and was piously educated by his parents. When a boy, it was his delight to listen to sermons, and he would relate at home what he had learned at church. His conduct was always retiring and virtuous; and as he became older, the progress he made in all the higher branches of learning gained him the esteem of every one. Ricfridus, bishop of Utrecht, instructed him in spiritual perfection, and when his holy teacher died, Frederic was chosen bishop of Utrecht and thus became his teacher's successor. Installed in his new dignity, he evinced great zeal in converting sinners and abolishing abuses, which eventually gained him the crown of martyrdom. Surius relates that the holy Bishop reproved King Louis, on account of his unlawful marriage, as St. John had reproved King Herod, at first with mildness, but later with episcopal severity. The King seemed at one time to recognize and repent of his faults, but incited by the wicked woman, he gave orders to put the Bishop secretly to death. The murder was committed in the church, after the Saint had offered the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. It is said, that having received his death-wound, he himself advised the murderers to seek safety in flight; after which, having given his last admonitions to his people, who came in crowds to him, he peacefully resigned his soul to God. His holy body exhaled a refreshing fragrance, and many, who in their need took refuge at his tomb, obtained help immediately through his intercession.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. You no doubt admire the fortitude with which St. Symphorosa and her sons suffered cruel pains and even death, rather than offend God by forsaking the true faith.

You also believe that in this they acted rightly, and that they could not act otherwise, if they wished to obtain salvation. Why then are you so easily tempted by satan and wicked

people to offend the Majesty of the Most High, especially as your case and that of St. Symphorosa and her children are so widely different? Is it not your duty to avoid all offences to God and rather to die than to sin, as it was the duty of these Saints? You say frequently with your mouth, especially in the confessional, that you will rather die than commit sin: but how often have you already deceived your God and your Confessor? And when will you cease this deceit? I am willing to believe that you are tempted to sin by bad people and by evil spirits; but are these temptations to be compared with those which St. Symphorosa and her sons had to overcome? If they could resist and conquer, why can you not do the same? Be ashamed before your God, and this day resolve to manifest more fortitude in resisting temptations. Say, and this time with the firm resolution to keep your word: "Yes, rather die, than offend the Almighty!"

II. It was St. Frederic's delight even in his childhood, to listen to sermons, and he related at home what he had learned in church. Oh! that all parents would imprint on the hearts of their children a great esteem for the word of God, and enjoin them frequently to go and hear it; but at

the same time require them to give an account of what they have heard.

How different would be the conduct of the young, if this were done! But when the parents themselves neglect hearing the word of God, and set not a good example to their children, what is the result? We have it daily before our eyes. The children grow up without that knowledge which as Christians they ought to possess. There is no foundation laid for a truly Christian life; hence, it is quite natural that the children neither avoid sin, nor do good, and thus become a prey to vice. Christian Parents! awaken from your sloth and fulfil your duties! Manifest a constant zeal in hearing the word of God, and inspire the same into your children. Follow the example of St. Frederic's parents, and let your children relate to you, when they come from church, what they recollect of the sermon. Our pious forefathers acted in this manner; why should we not do the same? The salvation of your children, yes, your own salvation, should prompt you to do this. "Among the means to preserve the innocence of the heart (especially in the young), one of the most important is frequently to listen to the word of God," says St. Isidore.

THE NINETEENTH DAY OF JULY.

ST. ARSENIUS, HERMIT AND ABBOT.

Arsenius, one of the most celebrated Hermits, was born at Rome, of Christian parents, who, from his earliest childhood, reared him in the fear of the Lord. When more advanced in years, he became so proficient in Greek and Latin, in profane and sacred sciences, that he was considered the first among the learned men of Rome. The holy Pope Damasus ordained him Deacon, and soon after sent him to the Court of Constantinople, as the Emperor Theodosius had requested a learned man as

tutor for his two sons. Arsenius employed all his talents to instruct these princes thoroughly in virtue and knowledge. One day, when the Emperor came into the apartment where Arsenius taught his sons, he saw that the former was standing while the latter received their instructions seated. He immediately made Arsenius sit down and ordered the princes to stand during the time of instruction; "for," said he, "a teacher deserves more esteem than a father; the latter gives only temporal, but the former spiritual life, by teaching virtue and piety, which is far more valuable." But, notwithstanding these lessons of the Emperor to his sons, Arcadius, on one occasion, was so embittered against his holy teacher, when he had been reprov'd on account of a great fault, that he hired one of his servants to put him secretly to death. The servant, fearing God more than Arcadius, informed Arsenius of the prince's criminal design, and the holy man, who had long since grown tired of life at court, and who in prayer had heard a voice, saying: "Flee the society of men, and thou shalt save thy soul;" immediately resolved to quit Constantinople secretly. He therefore left during the night, and finding a ship ready to sail, he went on board and proceeded to Egypt. He then repaired to the desert of Scete, already famous for the many holy hermits who dwelt in it. He was already more than 65 years old; still he desired to receive the habit, as the mode of life of these hermits was **very** austere. As soon as they had appointed him a cell, he prayed to God on bended knees and with streaming eyes, to impart to him the grace to learn what he most needed to save his soul; and he again heard a voice saying: "Flee; be silent; be at rest." To these three principles of salvation the former tutor, now a pious hermit, endeavored to conform the remainder of his life. He fled all company of men, allowed none to enter his cell, strictly kept silence, never spoke of the great knowledge he possessed, nor of the high position he had once held. When asked the reason for which he observed so strict a silence, he replied: "I have never regretted my silence, but often the words I had spoken." He found peace in prayer, and in communing with God. His austerity was so great, that it astonished the oldest hermits. He fasted daily and much more strictly than the others; he slept at night upon the bare ground, or a stone, and never longer than two hours, employing the remaining time in prayer. He observed most faithfully, the regulations and pious customs of the hermits, and, in one word, he lived, from the beginning, so perfect a life, that he was a model to all others, although they were much more accustomed to the austerities than he.

Meanwhile, the Emperor had employed people to search

everywhere for Arsenius ; and the hermits, with whom he dwelt, began to think that he was the man for whom the Emperor manifested such solicitude. They interrogated him ; but not until they had placed him under obedience, could he be persuaded to answer. When Arcadius, who, on his father's death, succeeded to the throne, was informed of the abode of Arsenius, he immediately wrote to him, requesting forgiveness for past offences, begging him to return to court, and assuring him of his favor. The holy hermit, however, who had long tasted the sweetness of a solitary life, only answered, that he would pray daily for the Emperor, but would never leave the service of the Almighty. Solitude was much more agreeable to him than the tumult of the world, and to serve God was more glorious than to be the courtier of a mortal monarch. Hence he desired to remain free from all temporal cares and from all society of men. A nobleman came from Rome, and brought him the will of a near relative, who had died, leaving him great possessions. "How could he make me his heir, when I died long before him?" said the holy hermit. By this he intended to intimate, that he had died to the world and felt no longer any interest in temporal affairs. Theophilus, Patriarch of Alexandria, visited the holy man, accompanied by the Governor, and desired, on leaving, to receive an instruction from him. Arsenius said: "I beg you to leave Arsenius in peace, and when they inform you of his abode, do not again take the trouble to visit him." Still more severely did he treat a lady, who had travelled from Rome to Egypt, for the sole purpose of seeing this extraordinary man. Returning from a conference with the hermits, he met her on the way to his cell, where she, having waited for him, fell on her knees, saying that she had come only to see him and to recommend herself to his prayers. The holy man was almost angry, and without raising his eyes to her, he said, sternly: "Dost thou not know, that it ill becomes a woman to travel about the world alone? Thou wouldst have acted more wisely by remaining at home and superintending thy household, which work was given to thee by God, than by coming here and disturbing the hermits." After saying these words, he entered his cell; but the woman cried after him: "Promise, at least, that thou wilt pray to God for me." "Yes," replied he, "I will immediately pray to God to efface from my memory every recollection of thee." By this the Saint showed his desire to be separated from the world and belong only to God. Sometimes, however, a feeling of weariness with his religious life would steal over him ; but no sooner did he become aware of it, than he would say to himself: "Arsenius, why hast thou left the world and clothed thyself in

the habit of a religious? Why hast thou chosen this desert as a dwelling-place? Was it not in order to serve the Almighty? Oh! endeavor then to follow in the steps of Him for whom thou hast come. If thou dost not wish to live like a hermit, thou oughtest to have remained in the world." In this manner the holy man comforted himself, and freed himself from all indolence and weariness in the service of God. The temptations of Evil spirits, who sometimes appeared visibly to him, he conquered by meditation on death, by fervent prayers, and trust in God; frequently also, by the protection of the angels, who appeared to him during the contest. These instructed him also in many things, by means of visions, at the time of prayer. Thus he once saw a Moor, who cut wood and bound the pieces together to carry them home. Finding that the load was too heavy for him, he added still more wood, and then made an effort to carry the burden. At another time Arsenius saw a man, who stood by a river, and with great pains poured water into a barrel, which being full of holes, retained nothing, and thus all his efforts were in vain. When the holy man professed his surprise at both these performances, the angel explained them to him. "The first," said he, "represents a sinner, who, already guilty of one or more mortal sins, still commits others, thinking that one confession will suffice for all. The second represents a man who performs a great deal of work, but without a good intention. The first renders his conversion very difficult, and the burden of his sins will eventually drag him down and precipitate him into hell. The second has no merit for his good works." These and other similar instructions St. Arsenius received from the angels, and he made use of them for his own perfection and that of others.

When Arsenius had thus lived a most austere life for more than fifty years, God revealed to him his approaching end. Although the Saint fervently desired to see the Almighty face to face, those around him in his last moments, after he had received the Holy Sacraments, observed that he, who had lived so holy a life, feared death, and trembled at its approach. "Can it be," some one asked him, "dear father, that you should fear death?" "Yes, truly," answered he, "I fear death, and have feared it ever since I began to lead a religious life." But this fear did not last long; and soon peace and joy, such as trust in the Divine mercy imparts, beamed from his countenance. Comforted and happy, he ended his admirable life, in the 115th year of his life, or as others say, the 120th.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. "Flee, be silent, be at rest:" three short but comprehensive lessons which heaven gave to St. Arsenius, and by which he regulated his holy life. May you also conform your life to them! Flee all occasions and dangers of sin. Flee those who, by word or action, incite you to do wrong, or prevent your doing good. "Be silent." Indulge not in useless, frivolous and sinful discourses. You have, in regard to this, already too much to answer for. "Be at rest." Let not cares for the goods of this world so engross you that you cannot give sufficient time to the welfare of your soul. Occupy a portion of each day in prayer and other spiritual exercises. On Sundays and holy days do more. Read a devout book, and besides attending at mass, hear a sermon, and assist at other public devotions. At the end of each month, meditate on the state of your soul, and consider what you must do and what you must avoid in order to save your soul. This is to rest from all other labors, and to attend to what is the most important of all, the salvation of your soul. Consider the words of St. Paul, which I have already given you elsewhere: "We entreat you, brethren, that you use your endeavor to be quiet, and that you do your own business;" that is, the one most needful and most important, that of your eternal salvation. (I. Thess. iv.)

II. St. Arsenius feared death, although he had lived during many years so holy a life. How happens it that you, leading so different and perhaps so sinful a life, do not fear death? Oh! you must probably think too little of death. You do not earnestly consider death and the life that follows it, or you think that

your last hour is far off, and hence, that you have plenty of time left to be concerned about it. But perhaps you may belong to these who purposely avoid meditating on their last hour, that they may not be disturbed in their sinful career. They do not desire to hear anything about death, in order that no fear, no trepidation, no melancholy thoughts may take possession of their hearts. How devoid of sense is this! Does death put off his coming, or does he not make his appearance at all, if we do not think of him? Will he appear less awful, when we do not wish to hear and know anything about him? Experience teaches that death appears much more terrible to those who seldom or never think of him, than to those who have often meditated upon their last hour. He fills the soul of the former with much greater dread. If you wish your last hour to be free from fear, fear now, but let your fear be reasonable. Unreasonable is the fear of death, when we tremble at the thought of it, but do nothing further. Such fear I do not wish you to feel; for it is senseless and hurtful. Reasonable should your fear be: that is, it should incite you to avoid everything that is able to make your death unhappy, and to endeavor to do all that can be done to make your last hour one of happy trust in God's infinite mercy. To become the possessor of this wholesome fear, it is necessary that you frequently think of death, not as far off, but as quite near. "Remember that death is not slow," says the Holy Ghost, (Ecc. xxiv.) "Behold the days of thy death are nigh." (Deut. xxxi.) "Death stands before the doors of the aged, but he comes unawares to the young." (St. Bernard.)

THE TWENTIETH DAY OF JULY.

ST. MARGARET, VIRGIN.

St. Margaret, a chaste virgin and glorious Martyr of our Lord Jesus Christ, was born at Antioch, in Pisidia. Her parents were rich and noble, but heathens, and her mother died while she was still an infant. Hence her father, whose name was Edesius, gave her to a nurse who lived in a neighboring village. This nurse was a Christian, and she endeavored to bring up Margaret with love for the Christian faith. God decreed that Edesius should leave his daughter for several years with her nurse, who having thus time and opportunity, instructed her in the doctrines of the true faith, and early awakened in her heart the desire to give her life for Christ's sake, by relating to her the tortures that so many Christians had suffered, for the love they bore to their Saviour. When Margaret had come to the age of discretion, she not only desired to be baptized, but soon afterwards consecrated her virginity to the Almighty, desiring nothing more ardently than to be numbered among the martyrs.

Margaret's father was greatly incensed when he was informed that she had embraced the Christian faith, but he concealed his wrath, and taking his daughter home, he endeavored by alternate promises and terrible menaces, to induce her to forsake Christ. When he found that all was useless, he took other means, which he believed would be efficacious. He told her that henceforth he would no longer regard her as his daughter, but as his servant and slave. He commanded her to lay aside the garments she had worn until now and to put on old ragged clothes; after which he turned her out of the house, and ordered her into the fields to guard the herd. Edesius supposed that this would be harder for her to bear than tortures, and that it could not fail to produce a change in her mind. But he had deceived himself. Margaret, who had well taken to heart that Christ, for our sake, had so deeply lowered himself, as to hide his dignity in human form, rejoiced in being humiliated for his sake, and discharged her duties most faithfully. She guarded the herd with untiring patience, although she suffered greatly from the inclemency of the weather, and complained not of the miserable food that was given her. Her only consolation was that she could occupy her time in prayer and singing the praises of God.

Olibrius, Prefect of Pisidia, passed, one day, while travelling, near the place where Margaret was watching the herd.

Addressing her, he asked her name, where she was born and who were her parents, all of which questions Margaret answered with so much decorum and modesty, that Olibrius became deeply interested in her. As Margaret, in the course of the conversation, had also told him that she was a Christian, he made this a pretext to have her brought to him at Antioch. Speaking most kindly to her, he warned her to forsake Christianity, saying that she was born to something better than to guard the herd, and that he would make her his wife, and one of the greatest ladies of the city, if she would consent to his wishes. Margaret declared fearlessly that she would neither leave Christ, nor take as spouse a human being, as she was united with a much greater Lord. So unexpected an answer transformed Olibrius' love into such wild rage, that he immediately gave orders to tear off her clothes, and stretch her on the ground; after which she was so barbarously whipped that the ground was covered with her blood, so that those witnessing the scene were overcome with pity. The Christian heroine, during this torture, kept her eyes fixed on heaven, and showed no sign of pain; nay, when her executioners were tired, she appeared still willing to suffer more out of love to Christ. Observing this, Olibrius became so infuriated that he had her hands and feet bound and her whole body torn with iron combs and pierced with sharply pointed nails until he himself could no longer look at his victim, but ordered that she should be cast into a dungeon. Here the Virgin, her whole body mangled, gave thanks to God for having sustained her in her first terrible struggle, and humbly prayed that he would further help her with his grace. Heaven permitted that the Evil One, called in Holy Writ a serpent, appeared to her in this form, threatening to devour her; but as she had conquered the tyrant, so she conquered also the hellish serpent. Opposing him with the sign of the holy Cross, she banished him; and when he appeared a second time, she again made the same holy sign, and Satan had to confess that he possessed no longer power to harm her.

After this twofold glorious victory, God sent an Angel who immediately healed her wounds, and encouraged her to further conflicts, with the promise that Divine assistance would be given to her.

The following morning, Olibrius again called the fearless heroine into his presence, and repeated his promises and threats of the day before, but without any success. When he ascribed the healing of her wounds to his idols, the holy virgin refuted it with incontestable proofs, repeating that she would rather die a thousand deaths than forsake her faith. The tyrant seeing her

firmness, again ordered her clothes to be torn from her, after which, having tied her hands and feet, they burned her breast and sides with torches, and to make the suffering still more intolerable, they threw her into cold water, after her whole body had thus been cruelly tortured. But never had Margaret been more cheerful than during this terrible martyrdom, at the time of which, a voice from heaven was heard, saying: "Come, thou Spouse of Christ, enter the dwelling of the Saints, and receive the crown of eternal glory!" All present heard these words, and as the earth trembled under their feet, an indescribable fear seized them. Many openly confessed themselves Christians, and Olibrius fearing a revolt, commanded that Margaret should immediately be beheaded. The executioner showed timidity in obeying the prefect's words, but Margaret herself encouraged him to obey, and thus ended by the sword her chaste and holy life, in the year of our Lord, 175.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. How great must have been St. Margaret's estimation of virginal chastity, when she refused a most favorable marriage, and rather suffered the most intense torments than suffer the loss of her priceless treasure. How highly do you estimate the chastity conformable to your station in life? You must show this in the use of those means which are necessary to guard it, and by earnestly avoiding all sin that are against it. I know the world esteems these sins as trifles, or as human weaknesses: but Satan speaks through the mouth of the world. Will you believe him rather than God? "If we do not believe the Lord our God, whom shall we believe?" asks St. Ambrose. The just God has long ordained that Hell should be for sinners. He punishes no sins more severely than these. Examples of it we have in the flood, and in the fire that came down from heaven upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. How could He have punished the people in so terrible a manner, if the sin had been, in His sight, only human weakness?

Shall the Almighty be accused of ignorance or injustice? So far surely no one will dare to venture. No, the wicked world must be accused of lying, when it esteems as a trifle, what God looks upon as a crime, and punishes so severely. Wo to those who allow the deceiving world to blind them! "Do not err," says St. Paul, "neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers shall possess the kingdom of God." (I. Cor. vi.) According to these plain words, the unchaste have no hope of salvation, unless they reform and repent. The sin of unchastity closes the gates of heaven to men. How can we, therefore, regard it as small, and look upon it as only a human weakness? This vice, above all others, blinds its victim and smooths the path to other abominable sins, until it hardens him and makes him so impenitent, that he either thinks no longer of converting himself and doing penance, or is unwilling to alter his conduct; as the Holy Ghost teaches us in the following words: "They will not set their thoughts to return to their God; for the spirit of forni-

cation is in the midst of them, and they have not known the Lord." (Osee, v.) And what is the end of such persons? Answer this question yourself and judge by it, if sins against chastity ought to be considered as trifles.

II. How comforting is death, when we are invited to receive the crown of everlasting glory, like St. Margaret. If you desire such a death, battle bravely, after the example of this chaste virgin, against the flatteries and menaces of the world, the flesh, and Satan, especially when chastity is concerned. These three tyrants are your worst enemies, and attack you continually either with violence, or by besetting you with flatteries and caresses, but their success depends on your consent. "Satan," says St. Augustine, "is like a chained dog. He can bark, he can provoke, but he can only bite him who will be bitten. He does not harm us by violence but by persuasion with advice; he forces not our consent, he only asks it." The same may be said of the world and the flesh. They cannot force you to sin; and if you allow your enemies to conquer you, which takes place when you lend a willing ear to their temptations, you will vainly hope for the crown of glory. Eternal damnation will be your lot instead.

Sentence is already pronounced; the unchangeable judgment of God is revealed by St. Paul; for besides what you heard in his Epistle to the Corinthians, he also says distinctly somewhere else, that the impure cannot inherit the kingdom of God. (Ephes. v.) St. John further assures us that the impure shall have their portion in the pool burning with fire and brimstone. (Apoc. xxi.) How deep will be your woe, when being in this burning pool, that is, in hell, you remember, that for the short and abominable pleasure you sought in the gratification of your lust, you have deprived yourself for all eternity of the heavenly crown, and have precipitated yourself into the unquenchable fire of hell. "Let us at length consider within our own heart," says St. Augustine, "the lot of those who continued to the end in lust and in the pleasures of this life. Look at their graves, and say what is left of their pride, their riches, their debauchery? Search for their splendid garments, their luxuries; search for the frivolous amusements, the splendid banquets they attended; search for their idle jests, their laughter, their lawless pleasure. Where is all this now? and where are they? Heed well the last words; "Where is all this now, and in which Eternity are they now?"

THE TWENTY-FIRST DAY OF JULY.

ST. VINCENT OF PAUL, CONFESSOR.

In the year of Our Lord, 1660, St. Vincent of Paul ended his laborious and virtuous life at Paris, in the house of St. Lazarus. He was born in a small village of Gascony, in France, and was the son of poor but God-fearing parents. After having for some time kept the herds of his father, he devoted himself to study, and became so proficient, that he was soon raised to the

dignity of a teacher of Theology. During several years he instructed the young in order to gain the means of subsistence. One day, when, on account of some business, he had to go to Marseilles, he fell, wounded by an arrow, into the hands of the Turks, who robbed him of his clothes, put him in chains, and took him to Africa, where he endured great suffering on account of his faithfulness to the Christian Faith. He was the slave of three different masters, of whom the last was a Mameluke, a renegade Christian. The Saint succeeded in convincing him of his error, and escaping with him, happily reached France, where Vincent became pastor of two Churches, which he administered with truly holy zeal. St. Francis of Sales having heard of the virtues and holiness of Vincent, requested him to become the spiritual director of the Convent which he had founded at Paris, a function which the Saint faithfully discharged during forty years. St. Francis of Sales gave a short but most honorable testimony to his sanctity, by saying that he had never known a priest more worthy of esteem than Vincent.

In the year 1625, the Saint founded a congregation of secular priests, who, living like those of a religious order, were bound by a vow to do missionary work, especially in villages and other country places. He himself was a model to all, for he was occupied the greater part of his life of 85 years in instructing the country people and the lower classes. He formed the priests in his charge in every thing needful to apostolic missionaries, that their sermons and teachings might have the desired result. Besides this there scarcely existed a class of distressed men for whose temporal and spiritual welfare he was not solicitous. To this end he erected several houses of charity, and also founded large hospitals, that the poor, the sick, the orphans, the old, and those disabled and in misery, might have a home as well as the necessities of life. He also founded several societies or congregations, whose members had the care of these charitable institutions. All his thoughts, all the faculties of his mind seemed constantly employed in finding ways and means to help the distressed, and he feared no pains, no toil, no danger. It once happened that he saw several soldiers pursuing a laborer, sword in hand. Without a moment's hesitation he was in the midst of them, conjuring them to let him suffer the punishment they intended to inflict upon the poor man. Awed and surprised by his appearance, the soldiers sheathed their swords and allowed the man to escape.

The Saint's life, as far as he himself was concerned, was passed in great poverty and extreme austerity. He kept a rigorous fast, and employed as much time in prayer as it was possi-

ble to give. If any one requested his advice, before answering he would raise his eyes to heaven and in a short prayer beg the Almighty to enlighten him. He never left the house before he had, on bended knees, asked, in a short prayer, that God might be with him; and on his return, he would examine his conscience very minutely, to see if he had done anything amiss, or had neglected anything which pertained to the welfare of others. The least fault, even inadvertently committed, he punished most severely on his body. A mortal sin never burdened his soul, and he kept his innocence and purity undefiled, although surrounded by many dangers. When yet very young, he was an enemy to all frivolous speeches, and of such acts as he considered wrong in the sight of God. He endeavored constantly to prevent others from offending the Most High, and it grieved him exceedingly when he heard that one had tempted another to sin, or otherwise assisted him to do evil. Against such he spoke most severely from the pulpit, as he was convinced that the most horrible sin of which men can become guilty, is to lead each other to vice and crime, and by it to eternal perdition. He exhorted all not only to promote their own, but also their neighbors' spiritual welfare, as nothing is more pleasing to God than when we lead others to the path of virtue, and by it to everlasting joy.

For this reason, he sent the priests who were under him, whom he had instructed, not only into the neighboring villages, but also into Poland, Scotland, Ireland, and even into the far-off Indies, with orders to use all their efforts to convert the infidels, and to admonish the faithful to keep the Commandments of the Most High. He himself did the same wherever he was. There were many during his time, who endeavored to scatter secretly the seeds of the Jansenist error among the Catholics, pretending that it contained high spiritual perfection. Many Catholics began to listen to the false doctrines, and thus imperceptibly imbibed the heretical poison. But it was then that St. Vincent displayed his holy zeal for the purity of the true faith and the salvation of souls. He laid bare, in their whole deformity, the errors of the Jansenists, admonished all priests and spiritual directors to guard their flocks against these heretical wolves, and persuaded the bishops to assemble and denounce the pernicious heresy to the Apostolic See, and endeavor to obtain its condemnation. To the Catholics in general he represented the danger in which they stood of losing eternal happiness, if they approved only one single point of the new heresy, and thereby renounced the old, true, Catholic Faith. The great moral benefit he thus conferred on mankind will become known to the world on the

great day of Judgment when the Lord will reward every one according to his deserts.

To this short sketch of his life, we will add a few words concerning his happy death. At length, weakened by his incessant labors and great austerity to himself, he was seized by his last sickness. Having requested and received with great devotion the holy sacraments, he admonished those under him for the last time, to continue in their pious zeal, and occupied the remaining moments of his life in devout meditations. When those around him, in their prayers for him, came to the words: "Oh, God, come to my assistance!" he answered distinctly: "Oh, Lord, make haste to help me!" after which, full of days and merits, he tranquilly expired. At the hour of his death, his countenance showed the comfort and happiness that filled his heart. The many and great miracles which were wrought after his death by his intercession, confirmed the general opinion of him during his life; namely, that he was a truly holy man, gifted with an apostolic heart. Hence he was highly esteemed and honored as a great servant of God, both by ecclesiastics and laymen, high and low. Louis XIII., King of France, desired, when he was lying on his death-bed, to have the Saint near him. His consort, the Queen, chose him for her spiritual director, which duty the holy man accepted only under the condition that he should continue his works of love and charity, as well as his other ecclesiastical labors. This being granted, he continued to labor unweariedly, without allowing himself the slightest repose, until God called him to rest in the Kingdom of Heaven.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The continual labors and cares of St. Vincent had only one aim: the spiritual welfare of others and the prevention of all offences to God. He declaimed against those who incited others to sin and vice, and thus led them to eternal destruction. He fully comprehended the truth of the words of St. Dionysius the Areopagite: "Among all divine works none is more divine than laboring with God for the salvation of souls." Have you no opportunity to perform a work which is so agreeable in the sight of the Lord? Think well, and do not neglect it. St. Vincent was also convinced that among all evil works, there is none

more evil and displeasing to God than when we incite others to sin and thus assist the devil in gaining souls. Those who do this are called by the Holy Fathers of the Church messengers, representatives, vicars of the devil, because they are sent and incited by him to execute his plans for the destruction of men. They are his vicars, because they do that which is really the devil's work. Still more severely speaks St. James of Nisibis: "All those," says he, "deserve the name of devils, who prevent others from keeping those commandments, which appear hard to keep, and who advise them to follow the devices of the flesh." He

means to say that such people may be regarded as real devils ; but I add that they are worse, more hurtful and more to be feared than the devils themselves, as many a person whom Satan cannot tempt, is incited to sin by their flatteries, promises, and still more by their bad example, and, hence is led to destruction. If you, therefore, desire to be a representative of the devil, or his vicar, you ought to be informed that his abiding place belongs also to you. According to the words of Christ, hell is prepared for the devil and his angels: "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matth. xxv.). Angel means a messenger, a representative. For you and your equals, as angels and messengers of the devil ; for you, deceiver, as a representative of the devil, for you is hell, and in hell the eternal fire, if you do not leave your wicked ways. Endeavor to repair the evil you have occasioned, and do penance. What will you do?

II. The countenance of the dying St. Vincent expressed the comfort and happiness that filled his soul. This was probably because he thought of his innocent life, his zeal in the service of God, his constant endeavor to do good. You may well believe me when I say that you will not be thus consoled in your last hour, when you remember

your sinful, unchaste life, your negligence in the service of the Almighty, your idleness in performing good works. The recollection of them will cause you inexpressible fear and horror. Before all, will the thought of those sins torment you which you committed so wantonly, and which you have not even confessed rightly, much less expiated. "They shall come with fear at the thought of their sins," says the Holy Ghost, "and their iniquities shall stand against them to convict them." (Wisdom, iv). The wicked Antiochus did not heed his sins during the time that his health was unimpaired ; he gave them not even a thought : but when his last hour approached, he said : "But now I remember the evils that I did in Jerusalem." (I. Macc. vi.) Now, not before : now that I am called into eternity, to appear before the judgment—seat of the Most High, now I remember them against my will. But what resulted from this remembrance? "Into what tribulation am I come, and into what floods of sorrow." (I. Macc. vi.) If you would not experience equal woes, but die comforted and happy, lead a Christian life after the example of St. Vincent. Avoid evil, and practice good works. Should your conscience be stained with sin, expiate it by sincere penance, without losing another day.

THE TWENTY-SECOND DAY OF JULY.

ST. MARY MAGDALEN.

Mary Magdalen, so highly praised in the Gospel on account of her heroic conversion and fervent love of our Saviour, was born at Bethany, not far from Jerusalem. Her parents, as many authors say, were nobles. She had one brother named Lazarus, and a sister called Martha. When the fortune which her parents had left was divided, the Castle, or, as others say, the borough of Magdalum, came into her possession from which she also derived her name. St. Luke writes that before her conversion, she had been a sinner in the city, by which some authors understand that she had been addicted to the horrible vice of impurity; while others say that she had given scandal to the whole city by her splendid garments, frivolous manners, and her unrestrained associations with those of the opposite sex. The same evangelist also says that our Lord Jesus Christ delivered her from seven devils, which words many understand literally, believing that on account of her iniquities, she was possessed by several evil spirits, and like many others, was delivered from them by our Saviour.

The generality of the holy Fathers, however, believe that Martha had persuaded her sister to be present at the instructions of Christ, and although Magdalen at first followed this advice, only out of curiosity or to please her sister, it nevertheless proved to be the first step to her conversion. It is beyond all doubt that, moved by divine grace, she saw her guilt and resolved to do penance without delay; for, on hearing that Christ was eating with Simon, a Pharisee, she immediately repaired thither. She was unwilling to wait for an opportunity to speak with the Saviour alone, and to ask pardon for her sins without others being near. She could not wait so long. The unhappy state into which her soul was plunged, since she had come to the knowledge of her sin, made her impatient. Although foreseeing that her public confession would draw upon her the derision of the Pharisees and others, she heeded not; publicly she had sinned and publicly she would do penance. Hence, regardless of all human opinion, she hastened into the room where Christ was at table, and bitterly weeping, she cast herself at His feet, bathing them with a flood of repentant tears. Having wiped them with her hair, she kissed them reverentially and then opening a vase of alabaster, which she had brought, she anointed them with perfumes. It is not recorded whether, during or before the anointment, she spoke a single word, but her penitent heart was

seen in her humble attitude at the Saviour's feet, and the abundance of her tears spoke more eloquently than words could have done. It spoke of her repentance, it humbly asked pardon for her sins. Christ well comprehended this language; for, turning His eyes upon her, He said these comforting words: "Thy sins are forgiven thee;" and afterwards: "Thy faith has made thee safe; go in peace!" Before saying this, He reproved Simon, the Pharisee, and praised Magdalen, because when Simon saw that Christ allowed Magdalen to bathe His feet with her tears and to kiss them, he said to himself: "This man, if He were a prophet, would surely know who and what manner of woman it is that touches Him; for she is a sinner." Christ knowing the Pharisee's thoughts, said to him: "Simon, I have something to say to thee. A certain creditor had two debtors. One of them owed him five hundred pence, the other fifty. As they, however, could not pay him, he forgave them both; which, therefore, of the two, loveth him most?" "I suppose," replied Simon, "he to whom he forgave most." "Thou has judged rightly," said Christ; and turning to the woman, He said to Simon: "Dost thou see this woman? I entered into thy house; thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she bathed my feet with tears and wiped them with her hair. Thou gavest me no kiss; but she has not ceased to kiss my feet. Therefore I say to thee: Many sins are forgiven her, because she has loved much." Oh! what great consolation must have filled Magdalen's heart, when Christ's own words assured her that her sins were forgiven! She certainly went immediately to announce to her brother and sister the inexpressibly great mercy which the Saviour had bestowed upon her.

From this moment her heart was wholly changed, and entirely consecrated to Christ. She followed Him everywhere and listened with undivided attention to His instructions. One day Christ lodged at the house of her sister Martha, who was greatly concerned to serve Him well, while Magdalen, sitting at the Lord's feet, listened eagerly to His words. Her sister complaining of her, said to our Saviour: "Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister has left me alone to serve? Speak to her that she help me." The Lord, however, praised Magdalen's zeal, saying: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and art troubled about many things. But one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her." These words of the Saviour proved how much pleased He was with Magdalen's eagerness to listen to His holy teaching. He also showed how great His love was to her, when, yielding to her prayers and to Martha's, He raised Lazarus to life. This wonderful event is to be found in the holy Gospel of St. John, Chapter xi., and will

be more circumstantially described in the life of St. Lazarus. Here I will relate only the event which occurred six days before the last Easter which our Lord celebrated on earth. Christ came to Bethany, to the house of Simon, the leper, where they had prepared supper for Him. Lazarus, who had shortly before been raised to life, was, with others, sitting at the table. Martha served, and Magdalen brought a costly sweet-scented ointment, and anointed first the head and then the feet of Christ. When Judas murmured against it, saying that they could have sold so costly an ointment and given the money to the poor, Christ again defended Magdalen against the deceitful murmurs of the traitor and of some others, and said: "Why do you trouble this woman? for she has wrought a good work upon me. The poor you have always with you, but me you have not always. Amen I say to you, wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also which she has done, shall be told for a memory of her." Soon after this, when the passion and death of our dear Lord took place, the Gospel tells us that Magdalen, with the divine Mother and other pious women, was present upon Calvary at the Crucifixion of the Saviour. Words are too poor to describe the feelings of grief and tenderness with which she kissed and worshipped the holy body when it was taken from the Cross. Although after the burial, she went to Jerusalem with the other women, she returned to the sepulchre of Christ, with some other women, on the day after the Sabbath. It was their intention again to anoint the holy body of the Saviour with fragrant essences. On the way, they thought of the impediment which the great stone would be which closed the Sepulchre of the Redeemer. They most probably knew nothing of the guard which Pilate had set there at the request of the High-Priest. "Who will remove the stone from the entrance of the Sepulchre?" said they to each other on the way. God had removed this obstruction; for, when they arrived at the Sepulchre, they saw that the stone was rolled away and the Sepulchre was open. They went together into it, but found that the body had disappeared. An angel informed them that He, whom they looked for, had risen, and commanded them to announce it to His disciples. Soon after, Magdalen was blessed with the appearance of the Lord in the form of a gardener, which is more circumstantially related in the Gospel. There is no doubt that she several times had the grace to see her Divine Master during the forty days He was upon earth. She was also present when He gloriously ascended to heaven; after which He, on Pentecost day, sent the Holy Ghost to His disciples, apostles, and other faithful followers. As long as Magdalen remained

at Jerusalem, she was with the Divine Mother and other pious women.

A considerable time after these events, the Christians were cruelly persecuted, and the Jews were determined to suffer Lazarus, the brother of St. Magdalen, no longer in Jerusalem, as he was a living testimony to the divinity of Christ. Hence they placed him, his two sisters, Magdalen and Martha, a servant of theirs, named Marcella, and Maximin, one of the 72 disciples of Christ, in a boat, without rudder, sail, or boatman, took them far from the land into the high sea, and left them, being quite certain that the waves would soon swallow the boat and all its occupants. But God led them safely to France, and they landed at Marseilles amid a crowd of heathens who had come to the shore. This miraculous voyage prepared the hearts of the heathen inhabitants to receive the true Faith. Lazarus, who had been consecrated bishop by the apostles, made his episcopal See in the same city where they had landed. Maximin, as priest, chose the city of Aix as his residence. Martha slowly gathered a great many women around her, and having instructed them in the Christian faith, led a retired, pious, almost a religious life with them, while Magdalen converted a great many by her teachings and her holy life. In the course of time, however, she retired into a desert, far from any habitations of men, and made her abode in the dark cavern of a mountain. There she dwelt during 30 years, leading a most severe life, occupied in praying, contemplating the divine mysteries, and the bitter Passion and death of our Saviour. She repented daily, with floods of tears, of the iniquities of her former days, although she had heard from the lips of Christ that they were forgiven. In one word, her life was much more that of an angel than that of a human being. Hence we may well believe, what many relate of her, that she was frequently visited by angels, who provided her with food and even raised her into heaven to hear the seraphic choir sing the praises of the Most High. Before her death, she was carried by two spirits of light into a little church two miles from her dwelling, where, having received from the hands of St. Maximin the food of the angels, she soon after gave her soul into the keeping of Him whom she had so fervently loved while upon earth.

The cavern in the mountain where the great penitent so long dwelt, as well as the little church which contains her relics, are renowned for the many miracles wrought there. The most illustrious, however, was the Saint herself, who from so great a sinner became so great a penitent and so fervent a lover of Christ. The holy fathers can hardly find words of praise

enough, not only for her heroic conversion, but also for her generous, faithful, and fervent love towards her Saviour. And who can sufficiently admire the austere penance, lasting for 30 years, which she underwent in the cavern, although she knew that her sins were entirely forgiven?

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Magdalen is an example of a great sinner, a great and true penitent, and at the same time a great Saint. Consider her life well. She was a great sinner; hence the holy Evangelist calls her "a sinner of the city;" but she nevertheless obtained pardon for her sins and gained salvation. Learn from this that you need not despair, although your iniquities may be great and manifold. You can obtain pardon and gain salvation just as well as Magdalen, if you do true penance as she did. The beginning and the road that led Magdalen to repentance was listening to the word of God. Had she neglected this, who can tell if ever she would have come to the knowledge of her sin, and to repentance? May this teach you how necessary sermons are for sinners. Many remain and die in their iniquities because they neglect attending them. Magdalen displayed unusual greatness of heart, when, conquering herself, she entered the house of a stranger, and in the presence of all those at table with Christ, cast herself at His feet and repentantly acknowledged herself a sinner. Let it be a lesson to you that a sinner must conquer himself, if he will do true penance and obtain pardon for his evil doings. It needs only one firm resolution to overcome himself, should it be a hard task to confess his iniquities. If he was not ashamed to do evil, why should he be ashamed to confess it? It is not required of him to confess his sins publicly before all men, but only to the priest, who, he knows,

dares never reveal a word of what is told to him. If he still thinks it impossible to confess his sins, let him remember that it is incomparably easier than to bear the sufferings of hell. Magdalen begged of Christ nothing but the forgiveness of her sins, while others going to Him asked of Him health for themselves or others. "She alone," says St. Chrysostom, "begged for the health of her soul, for deliverance from sin, and was immediately heard." This should be an example to you, that you should ask nothing of God more frequently, than to forgive your sins, and lead you to everlasting life. This prayer will reach the throne of God much sooner, and be answered by Him much more certainly, than if you request of Him temporal goods, which are often more injurious than wholesome.

II. As soon as Magdalen recognized the gulf into which her sins were precipitating her, she did penance, which she continued until the end of her life, although she was certain that she had obtained pardon. She endeavored to atone for her past offences by following Christ even to His cross, by nourishing a fervent love for Him, by faithfully attending His instructions, by displaying unwearied zeal in converting others. God enlightens you in regard to the misfortune and danger in which you are. You also recognize the necessity to do penance. Oh! do not neglect to tear yourself away from all evil, and do not put off your penance from day to day

until death overtakes you. Neither be content with only confessing your sins, but repent of them daily, and practise works of penance as long as your life lasts. Try to expiate, in a measure, the evil deeds of your past life, by great fervor in the service of the Almighty, and by other works of love and charity. Endeavor also to lead others to the feet of your Lord. By following the penitential life of St. Magdalen you may rest assured that you will follow her into eternal bliss. Further, do you not think that Magdalen has oftentimes given humble thanks to God for not having let her die in her sin, but having given her time to do penance? I believe this most certainly; and you have every reason to do the same, since, how long would you be in hell, if you had died in your sin? To whom do you owe thanks for not having died? Oh! to no one else than the infinitely merciful God, to the same God whom you have so often offended! How do you thank your Saviour for so priceless a grace? "Whom have I to thank,"

asks St. Augustin, "that the earth has not engulfed me? that heaven has not annihilated me with a thunderbolt? that fire has not burned me to ashes? or that water has not drowned me? Whom have I to thank for it but Thee alone, O Lover of my soul! whose mercy is above all His works." But let me ask you, does God, so inexpressibly kind to you, deserve that you should renew your offences? Oh! what a question! Truly you must be the most ungrateful of all human beings, if you again offend the Almighty, after He has shown such mercy to you. Magdalen acted not thus: but, on the contrary, loved her Saviour with a constant affection; as otherwise, her penance would not have been true. And thus will your penance not be true, not sufficient to save your soul, if you again offend God. "It is a useless penance," says St. Augustine, "if we again tarnish it with new sin. Repentance is idle, if we commit the sin again. To ask pardon for sin committed, and then to sin again, is folly."

THE TWENTY-THIRD DAY OF JULY.

ST. FRANCIS SOLANO, CONFESSOR.

Pope Benedict XIII., in the year 1726, solemnly canonized Francis Solano, of the Franciscan Order, famous for his virtues and sanctity. He was born in 1549, at Mantilia, in Andalusia, of devout parents; and his conduct during his youth was so blameless, that he served as a model of piety to all who knew him. Having arrived at the age of twenty, he took the habit of the Franciscans, and he never relaxed the zeal to gain spiritual perfection which he manifested during his noviciate. Very soon after he had been ordained priest, he was appointed master of the novices, as his Superiors had perceived in him an unusual ability to lead others in the way of a spiritual life. He was also, in the course of time, entrusted with the functions of Superior,

but at his own earnest request was permitted to resign. The greater part of his religious life was spent in preaching. At the time when a pestilence raged, he requested and received permission to nurse the sick, and although himself stricken down with the disease, he returned immediately after his recovery to this work of Christian charity. Somewhat later he desired to be sent to America, that he might shed his blood for the sake of Christ. During his voyage, he did a great deal of good among those who were on board. His principal care was to prevent the rough sailors and others from committing sin, and to effect this he endeavored to inspire them with great horror for it by explaining to them the great wickedness of offending the Almighty. "Sin," said he to them, "is the greatest evil in the world. Death is preferable to offending God."

On his voyage to Peru, he gave an admirable and unprecedented example of love for his neighbor. When the large vessel, on board of which were St. Francis, another Franciscan, and 800 more passengers, had struck on a rock during the night and become so leaky that they feared it would sink, the captain sought to save himself with some of the better class. St. Francis was one of these; but aware that of those who would be left behind, many would not only die a temporal but also an eternal death, as some of them were still in the darkness of heathenism, while others were probably laden with great iniquities, he refused to accept the captain's offer, and remained on board of the sinking vessel. Using well the time left to him, he persuaded almost all the heathens to be baptized, absolved the Christians after having heard their confessions, and, holding in his hand the crucifix, he prepared all for death. He himself was for three days carried hither and thither by the waves, and was at length thrown with several others upon an island, where they suffered terribly for want of food. At Lima, the capital of Peru, he remained not long, but soon continued his journey with the Father Superior to Tucuman, which was the field of labor assigned to him. It is known only to God how many heathens he converted to the true Faith, and how many sinners he brought to repentance.

The last nine years of his life he passed at Lima, whither his Superiors had sent him to establish a stricter discipline in the Franciscan monastery. His principal occupation in this city was again preaching, which he did partly in the churches, partly in the streets, to the greatest benefit of souls. The most remarkable of his many sermons there, was one which he preached in 1604, when one day, by divine inspiration, he came upon the market-place, and began to speak with great eloquence and pathos of the wickedness of the inhabitants. In the course of the

sermon he said, that he, with truth, could say of Lima what St. John had said of the whole world: "All that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life." Hence, he said, they ought to know that because the measure of their sins was overflowing, God would punish the city most severely; they should therefore do penance without loss of time, and thus at least escape eternal destruction. The threatened punishment was not immediately inflicted upon them, as the inhabitants of Lima, like those of Nineve, by a general penance, and by prayers, averted, for a time, the wrath of the Almighty. In this century, however, we all know that they were punished with a terrible earthquake and a destructive submerging of the city by the sea, just as it happened to Nineve, whose inhabitants, returning to their former vicious life, were punished by God with famine and war. To the inhabitants of the city of Truxillo he also announced the divine vengeance on account of their vices. They, however, listened not to his admonition, but continued in their wicked courses, until God's judgment came down upon them, and the city was destroyed by a fearful earthquake. Many other future events were predicted by St. Francis, as he was graced by God with the gifts of prophecy and miracles. The difficult language of the Tucumans he mastered in fourteen days, and though his hearers were often of many different nationalities, they all understood the language in which he preached. Health returned to the sick when they merely touched his girdle, or when he laid his hands upon them. He raised one boy from the dead, and another, whose body was covered with ulcers, he healed instantaneously. Once, when an immense swarm of locusts devastated the land, the Saint drove them away by saying a short prayer and blessing the fields. The Tucumans complained that they had no water in the district appointed for them, and they therefore intended to make their home elsewhere. The holy man exhorted them to trust in God, went with them to a certain place, and, after having prayed, he ordered them to dig. Scarcely had they begun their work when so large a stream of wholesome water sprang up, that afterwards they built two mills that were driven by its force. Many sick regained their health by the use of this water, which made it so celebrated that people came for it from places many miles distant. Whoever considers these and other miracles of St. Francis will not be astonished to read how highly he was esteemed by persons of all stations, throughout the whole country. But he earned greater reputation by his virtues, which had procured for him, while yet in his novitiate the name of Saint, and in after life, that of an apostle. We have far too little space to relate all his deeds of

love towards God and man, or all the labors he performed for the salvation of souls, nor to give examples of his humility, his patience, his meekness, nor the spirit of penance which dwelt within him, nor the other Christian virtues that adorned his soul. He was so extremely austere, and mortified his body to such an extent, that he was, during the last years of his life, disturbed by scruples for having gone too far in his self-abnegation. God, however, revealed to him in a vision the great glory which he had gained by it in heaven, which not only quieted all his anxiety, but increased his eagerness to live more austere than before. God decreed at last to call His servant from this world into the kingdom of heaven, and revealed to him the day of his death. Two months before it took place, He sent him a fever, which confined him to his bed. He did not complain, but said that as he, for want of strength, could no longer mortify his body, Divine Providence was taking his place and was punishing him according to his deserts. Hence, he looked at his suffering as an especial mercy of the Almighty, and gave fervent thanks for the grace bestowed upon him. He desired to have the crucifix constantly before his eyes. The loving colloquies which he addressed to his Saviour, and the tender, pious ejaculations into which he broke forth, filled the eyes of all present with tears. Several times they saw him in an ecstasy. One day, when he came to himself, he exclaimed in the words of King David: "I have rejoiced in what has been told me: we shall go into the house of the Lord." Thither he went without delay, after having devoutly received the last Sacraments, as the many apparitions and miracles which happened after his death testified. His last words were those which he had before so frequently used: "Honor and praise be to God!"

An event which took place during his last illness, and especially on the day of his death, ought not to be omitted. The Saint, always filled with the desire to praise God, had frequently during his life invited all beings, especially the birds, to praise the Almighty. How much God was pleased with this, the following oft-repeated miracle proves. Several birds, following this invitation, came immediately and praised God with their beautiful songs. At the time of the Saint's illness, they came to the window of his room and rejoiced him with their warbling, without being frightened by the crowd of people who were constantly around the patient. On his last day, a whole chorus of the most beautiful birds sang before his room from five o'clock in the morning until near noon. This event cannot be denied or doubted, as many of the laity and clergy saw these birds with their own eyes and listened with the greatest astonishment to

their exquisite notes. The Almighty desired to honor in an especial manner him who had labored so many years for the honor of his God.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. "I would rather die than offend God," said St. Francis. By this he meant that he feared sin more than death. And he was right; for sin is a greater and more hurtful evil than death. Yes, death is, in itself, no evil; for, as St. Chrysostom says: "Sin is the only real evil." Death itself does not harm man, but if he be prepared for it, is beneficial to him, as it brings him to heaven. Sin alone harms man both in soul and body, and if he do not repent, precipitates him into the abyss of everlasting misery. What are your thoughts on this subject? Are you one of those who care little or nothing for sin, commit it without shame, continue in it without fear, and do not think of correcting their lives and atoning for their wickedness? Oh! wo be to you! How terrible a sign is this! Children of the Almighty despise sin and are willing rather to die than commit it. Should they, however, more from weakness than from wickedness, commit a fault, they immediately endeavor to purify themselves from its stain. Hence they must be children of Satan, who care little or nothing for sin, and who not only live on in their iniquities, but do not even feel their disgrace. To which of these do you belong? Pray to-day, that God may enlighten you in regard to sin, and you will most assuredly fear it much more than death.

II. St. Francis regarded his

bodily suffering as an especial grace of God. In this again he was right; for, according to the words of St. Ignatius, disease, as well as health, is a gift of the Almighty. When God sends any one a disease, it is for his good. Man lives either a pious or a godless life. If he lives piously, sickness will afford him an opportunity to expiate the still remaining punishment which he deserves for past offences, and to gather for himself treasures in heaven. If he live a godless life, then by sickness, the Almighty gives him time and opportunity to recognize, not only the power and justice of heaven, but also his own weakness and mortality, and thus repent, do penance, and either reform his life, or, should God call him into eternity, prepare himself for a happy death. Hence, consider sickness from whatever point you will, it is always a benefit. "It is a grace," writes St. Gregory the Great, "when we can expiate in the flesh the iniquities committed in the flesh." "It is better," says St. Bernard, "to suffer pain and gain heaven, than to remain in perfect health and be condemned." How many would have gone to eternal destruction, if they had not been sick before their end? If God sends a sickness to you, regard it as a sign of His mercy: give thanks to Him, and make good use of it. "If you are scourged by the pains of your disease, give thanks to the Almighty," says St. Augustine.

THE TWENTY-FOURTH DAY OF JULY.

ST. CHRISTINA, VIRGIN AND MARTYR.

Those who consider the life and the different kinds of martyrdom of this holy Virgin, and do not remember what we said in the preface to these volumes, may easily be tempted to suppose that much of what we relate is impossible, and the work of imagination. But as the whole history is founded on indubitable and unobjectionable testimony, we shall relate her life plainly and faithfully, remembering that God chose this holy Virgin, in preference to innumerable others, to honor and glorify His holy faith among the blind heathen, to confound the tyrants and persecutors of Christendom, and to reveal to the world the wonders of His Omnipotence.

The Saint was a native of Tyro, in Tuscany, where her father Urban, was prefect. He was a sworn enemy to the Christians, and hardly passed a day on which he did not call some one of the faithful into his presence, and doom him to suffering and to death. Christina, who on seeing this, observed at the same time how fearless and happy the Christians were during their torments, was curious to know what kind of men they were, why they were thus persecuted, and what gave them strength to bear so uncomplainingly, nay, so cheerfully, the sufferings they endured. When instructed about all this, the grace of God worked so strongly in her, that she felt an intense desire to be, by means of holy Baptism, numbered among the Christians. She rested not until her desire was fulfilled, and at the age of nine years, she received holy Baptism and with it the name of Christina. Her zeal was greater than could have been expected at her tender age. She secretly took her father's idols, composed of gold and silver, and breaking them into pieces with the assistance of others, divided them among the poor. Her father, almost beside himself with rage when he was informed of this, resolved to avenge, with his daughter's blood, the dishonor done to the gods, but not until he had endeavored to win her by kindness from the faith of Christ. Hence he called her to him and all alone with her, urged her, with many manifestations of kindness and at last with menaces, to forsake Christ. Christina, however, said fearlessly: "Do with me whatever you like, my dear father; you can take my life, but the faith of Christ you have no power to tear out of my heart. My Saviour will strengthen me to suffer patiently all that you have threatened." Scarcely had she spoken these words, when the inhuman father commanded the execu-

tioners whom he had called to scourge her most cruelly over her whole body. Christina gave no signs of pain during this suffering. After this, the tyrant ordered that the wounds she had received should be enlarged with iron combs and whips with sharp points, which was done with such ferocity, that whole pieces of flesh were torn from the tender body of the Virgin. Christina stood at first immovable with her eyes turned to heaven, and then praised and thanked the Almighty for so visibly aiding her to bear her pains. The father,—who was no father, but a savage beast,—still more embittered by her conduct, ordered an iron wheel to be brought. Christina was then bound upon it, oil was poured over her, and then the wheel was raised in such a manner that it could be turned. When this was done, a fire was prepared under it, in order slowly to roast the maiden. Almighty God, however, so effectually strengthened His heroic confessor, that she sang loudly during this terrible torment. She remained unhurt by the flames, while many of the spectators were seized by them and severely injured. The tyrant, astonished at this miracle, would still not relent, but ordered her to be dragged to a dungeon, with the intention to renew her torture on the following day.

Hardly had Christina entered the dungeon, when an angel of the Most High appeared to her and healed her wounds, encouraged her to persevere, and gave her assurance of divine assistance. When her father was informed that she was so miraculously healed, he immediately sent some executioners into the prison, with orders to tie a large stone around her neck, and cast her into a lake, so that nothing further might be seen or heard of her. But the same angel who had visited her the day before, carried her safely to the shore. Christina was sent again to the dungeon, and Urban thought of new ways and means to torment her. But when morning dawned, he was found dead in his bed. He had probably died from a stroke of apoplexy, brought on by his uncontrolled anger. Thus God punished, by a sudden and unhappy death, his inhuman wickedness. Christina was much more pained by the eternal destruction of her father, than by all the tortures she had suffered. The latter, however did not end with her father's death: for Dio, who was Urban's successor, not only in his functions, but also in his cruelty, had Christina brought before him, and as she remained firm in her refusal to abandon the Christian faith, he commanded an iron cradle to be constructed and filled with boiling oil and tar, into which Christina should be cast. The heroine evinced not the slightest fear of this instrument of torture, but signing herself with the sign of the Cross, she said to the soldiers who cast her into the cradle:

“ Well have you reason to lay me like a child in a cradle ; for it is hardly a year since I was born in holy baptism.” She remained in it a considerable time ; but when they at length perceived that she neither felt pain nor was in the least harmed, they took her out and brought her into the temple of Apollo, commanding her to sacrifice to him. No sooner, however, had Christina set foot in the temple, than she made the sign of the Cross, and the idol, falling from the altar upon the ground, was broken into a thousand pieces. At the same moment, the prefect Dio, struck with apoplexy, sank dead upon the earth. The soldiers, who had brought Christina into the temple, were terrified by this twofold wonder, and freeing the Virgin from her fetters, they cried aloud : “ Truly, the God of the Christians is the only true God.” Many of those present abandoned idolatry and became converts to the Christian faith. When Julian, Dio’s successor, heard of Christina and the sudden end of his predecessor, he feared that the people might accuse him of cowardice, if he did not continue the process against a weak woman. Hence he said to her : “ Thou must either immediately sacrifice to the gods, or I will cast thee alive into a burning furnace.” Christina refused more earnestly than ever to obey, and Julian ordered her to be cast into the furnace, which meanwhile had been prepared. The order was executed, and Christina remained in it until the fifth day, unharmed, as, in ages past, the three companions of Daniel had been in the furnace of Babylon. She also imitated these in constantly praising God and giving thanks for so many mercies received. Julian ascribed this miracle to magic, and following the advice of a magician, he had Christina thrown into a dark cavern, into which this magician had charmed a great many of the most venomous animals. The holy Virgin once more signed herself with the cross, and none of the animals touched her. She stood in the midst of them, giving praise to the Almighty, her Protector. To prevent this they tore out her tongue, at the command of Julian ; but even then she ceased not praising God. This new miracle converted many to the Christian faith, and the tyrant commanded them at length to fasten her to a stake and pierce her with arrows. While they bound her fast, her heart was filled with the desire to behold in heaven Him for whom she had suffered so much on earth. She therefore called on God to impart to her the long-desired crown of martyrdom. Her prayer was answered, for one of the arrows found the way to her heart, and her heroic soul went to Him by whose mighty assistance she had conquered three tyrants. Her glorious death took place in the year of our Lord, three hundred. We conclude the life of this Saint with the words of St. Augustine :

"When we consider the perseverance of a human being, tortured in so many ways, it seems incredible. But when we think of the omnipotence of the Most High, the relation will not be deemed impossible."

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Christina made use of the opportunity offered her to instruct herself in the new faith, and thus was sooner convinced of its truth. Those tyrants by whom she was tormented had the same opportunity to instruct themselves, but used it not. They therefore did not become convinced of its truth, but remaining in their error, became more hardened in their wickedness, and were thus lost to all eternity; while Christina was saved by the true faith. So much depends on rightly using opportunities which lead to the path of heaven. How despairing must now be the grief of those tyrants to think that they had the opportunity, but used it not to their salvation. It is now lost to them, and will never again return. Oh! how sad! Compare with this the happiness which St. Christina now enjoys, because she made use of the opportunities God gave her. You have also, in your station, opportunities enough to do good and to work out your salvation. Why do you not make better use of them? Believe me, the greatest pain that one endures in hell is to think: "I could have saved my soul, escaped hell, and gained heaven. I had time and opportunity to use the means necessary for it; but I have forfeited them. I have no more time and opportunity now, and shall have them nevermore." "Oh! how dreadful will be the torment of the damned when they remember that they did not use the opportunity they had to correct their lives, and thus have precipitated themselves into everlasting punishment;" says St. Chrysostom. If you wish not to experience these torments

yourself, improve better in future the opportunities which are offered to you.

II. St. Christina, a tender virgin, scarcely ten or eleven years old, suffered for the true faith such terrible tortures, not only with invincible fortitude, but with happiness, praising God, during her martyrdom. What do you suffer for the love of God, and what is your conduct during your suffering? Your suffering does not deserve the name, when compared with that of St. Christina, and still your conduct is far from that of this holy martyr. Can so different a suffering expect an equal glory in heaven, or do you perhaps think that you can enter heaven without having suffered, although the Saints took possession of it only by suffering? You yourself will hardly have the heart to affirm this. Oh! then resolve to bear your small trials with greater patience. Murmur not against the Almighty, but praise His wisdom and give thanks to Him that He leads you by the same path by which He led His Saints to heaven, and on which walked even Christ our Lord. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into his glory?" (Luke, xxiv.) "All that have pleased God passed through many tribulations, remaining faithful." (Judith, viii.) Why, then, would you seek another way than that of the cross? "The entire life of Christ consisted of crosses and martyrdom, and you desire nothing but peace and pleasure in this world?" Thus speaks the pious Thomas à Kempis; while St. Bernard says: "The only true path that leads us to heaven is the cross and suffering."

THE TWENTY-FIFTH DAY OF JULY.

ST. JAMES, APOSTLE ; ST. CHRISTOPHER, MARTYR.

St. James, who is surnamed the Greater because he was called to the Apostolate earlier than the other Apostle of the same name, was born in Galilee. He was the son of Zebedee and of Mary Salome, and a brother of the holy Apostle, St. John, the Evangelist. One day, when he sat with his father and his brother in a boat, mending the nets, Christ passed by, and said to him and his brother only these few words: "Follow me!" Immediately obeying, James and John left the boat and their father, and followed Him, remaining constant to Him, until His bitter passion. St. Epiphanius testifies that St. James always lived in celibacy, and it is known from the Gospel that he was one of the most intimate disciples of the Saviour; for on several occasions, when no other Apostle was admitted, James was present with Peter and John; for instance, when Christ raised to life the daughter of Jairus; during His transfiguration on Mount Thabor, and when, at a distance from the others He performed His holy prayers in the garden of Gethsemane, sweating blood in His agony. St. Mark relates that Christ called James and his brother, on account of the vehemence of their zeal, "Boanerges," or children of the thunder, because they announced the Gospel with such earnestness, that their voices penetrated the hearts of men, like the rolling of the thunder, and moved them to recognize and receive the truth. St. Luke narrates that once, when the Samaritans would not allow Christ to enter into their city, James and John were so indignant at the insult offered to their beloved Master, that they said to Him: "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" But Christ, rebuking them, said: "You know not of what spirit you are. The Son of Man came not to destroy souls, but to save." By these words, He intended to teach them that the spirit of Christianity and of the Gospel was no spirit of vengeance, but one of love and gentleness; more intent upon the salvation of men than upon their punishment. In the Gospel of St. Matthew, we read that the mother of James and John had come to Christ, asking Him to place one of her sons on His right hand, the other on His left in His kingdom. The Saviour reproved the two Apostles for their ambition, saying: "You know not what you ask." After this, He asked them: "Can you drink of the Chalice that I shall drink?" And they resolutely re-

plied: "Yes, we can." They verified their words by their deeds; for they suffered much for Christ's sake, as is seen in their lives.

St. James, soon after the ascension of the Lord and the coming of the Holy Ghost, preached at Jerusalem, at Samaria and in all Judæa. After this, he went to Spain and did the same with unabating zeal. How long he remained there, and how he succeeded in disseminating the Christian faith is not known. At Saragossa, they show a Church which, according to tradition, was built by this holy Apostle; and the cause of its erection is said to have been as follows: The Saint one night left the city with his disciples and went to the banks of the river Ebro, to offer his prayer there undisturbed. Suddenly the Blessed Virgin, who at that time was still on earth, appeared to him, surrounded by many angels. James recognized her immediately, and, falling on his knees before her, honored her as the Mother of his Redeemer. She said to him: "Thou shalt build upon this place, a Church in my honor; for I know that the inhabitants of Saragossa will conceive an especial devotion to me, for which reason I will henceforth protect them." James obeyed her words, and erected a Church which although small at the beginning, was afterwards enlarged and rebuilt in its present form. This Church is still called the "Church of the Pillar of St. Mary," because the Blessed Virgin appeared to the Apostle on a pillar which yet remains. After some years, St. James returned with several disciples to Jerusalem. Of the latter, seven became bishops in the course of time, and were sent back to Spain to convert the inhabitants of that noble land. He himself labored with great zeal, both at Jerusalem and in the surrounding country, for the conversion of the Jews. Many were brought by him to the Christian faith, while others became so enraged at him, that they determined to make away with him. The better to accomplish this, they took, to aid them, two magicians, Hermogenes and Philetus, requesting them to have a public discussion on religion with St. James and to disgrace him before the people. Should they, however, not succeed in this, they were to send some evil spirits to torment him. Philetus began; but was so convinced of his error by the Apostle, that he asked his pardon on bended knees, and became a convert to the Christian faith. Hermogenes, greatly incensed at this, conjured the devils by his magic and commanded them to bring the Apostle and Philetus to him in chains. The evil spirits, however, by order of the Almighty, seized Hermogenes, and dragged him, in spite of all his blasphemy, to St. James. Just at the time, Philetus was there. The Apostle requested the latter in the name of Jesus Christ to break the chains of his former teacher,

which was accordingly done. Astonished at this, Hermogenes burned all his books of magic, and embraced the Christian faith.

When the enemies of the Apostle perceived that they did not succeed in their project, they consulted two Roman Centurions, Lysias and Theocrates, whom, by promising a large sum of money, they had bribed for their plans. They wished to cause a disturbance among the people while the Apostle was preaching, and the two officers, pretending they had come to quiet the people, should seize the Saint and bring him to King Herod. All was done as they had planned. St. James preached with his usual zeal, and proved clearly to the assembled Jews, that Jesus Christ, whom they had so ignominiously put to death on the Cross, was the Messiah, so long promised by the Almighty. According to the agreement, the enemies of the Apostle, not willing to listen any longer to his convincing arguments, stirred up the people, and one of them, a scribe, named Josiah, threw a cord around St. James' neck, when the two Centurions hastened forward, seized him, and brought him to King Herod. They accused him of having instigated the people to rebel, and this was sufficient for King Herod, who, to please the Jews, desired to put him to death. Nothing more agreeable could happen to the Apostle than to give his life for Christ's sake, and the joy he felt in his heart was perceptible in his countenance. He repeated publicly the confession of his faith and again announced that Christ was the true Messiah and Saviour of the world. When he was sentenced to be beheaded, he declared himself ready, not only for this manner of death, but for any other, however painful. The above-mentioned Josiah was deeply touched by the Saint's fearlessness, and not only repented of having apprehended him, but also confessed openly the faith of Christ; and casting himself at the feet of the Apostle, when the latter was led away to be executed, he humbly begged to be forgiven. The Saint, embracing him kindly, said: "Peace be with you!" The Jews, still more embittered at this, importuned Herod so long that at length he ordered Josiah to be beheaded. On his way to the place of execution, St. James met a man who had the palsy, and immediately restored him to health in the name of Jesus Christ. Arrived at the place, he gave thanks to God for having vouchsafed him the grace to die for the faith of Christ, and cheerfully received the fatal stroke, ending his life shortly before Easter. He was the first of all the Apostles who gave his blood for Christ, and is the only one whose death is mentioned in Holy Writ. His body was buried by the Christians with due solemnity, but was afterwards transported by his disciples to Compostella, where he is honored by the whole

Christian world. Spain regards and esteems him as its mighty protector. It is known from authentic sources, that he appeared several times visibly at the head of the Spanish army, which, led by him, gained glorious victories over the barbarians.



The Roman Martyrology, to-day, honors also St. Christopher, who received the crown of martyrdom about the middle of the third century. He was born and educated in idolatry, but no sooner had he embraced Christianity, than he zealously strove to convert others to the true faith, and labored especially for this end in the district of Lycia. When, on this account, he was arraigned before the heathen judges, he fearlessly confessed Christ. Making him prisoner, they sent two wicked heathen women to him, who by tempting him to evil deeds, should open the way for him to forsake Christianity. But the Saint not only induced them by his exhortations to change their conduct, but also converted them to the Christian faith; which so enraged the judge, that he ordered the Saint to be tormented most cruelly. Perceiving, however, that the Saint remained constant under all kinds of martyrdom, and by his example converted a great many heathens, the tyrant at length ordered him to be beheaded.

This Saint is generally represented as of a gigantic stature, with a budding staff in his hand, carrying Christ, in the form of a lovely child, across a river. The cause of this is, that St. Christopher possessed a very tall figure, and one day, while expounding the truth of the Gospel to the heathens, he fixed a withered stick into the ground, which, to testify to the truth of his teachings, immediately began to bud. It is also told of him that his desire to assist his neighbor induced him to make his dwelling for some time by a river, and to carry travellers across to the opposite shore, as there was no bridge. While employed in these deeds of kindness, Christ Himself appeared one day to him, in the form of a lovely child, desiring to be carried over the river. The Saint took Him upon his shoulder, and carried him to the opposite shore, where the Saviour, making Himself known, filled the heart of His faithful servant with inexpressible joy.

There have been in the last few centuries, some who, wickedly desiring to tarnish the glory of the Saints, dared to assert that St. Christopher never existed. Several learned men, however, have, by their powerful arguments, silenced this erroneous statement. It is an established fact, that this holy Martyr was already honored by the whole Christian world, more than a thousand years before Luther. There are several convents and churches which were founded in his honor. It must here also

be remarked that the Catholic Church by no means approves of the superstition practised by some weak-minded persons; as, for instance, to say the so-called Prayer of St. Christopher, in order to find hidden treasures or to receive money from the Saint. It is known that, in our time, some who practised this superstition were punished by a just judgment of the Almighty in a terrible manner, by a sudden death.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. No sooner was James called by Christ to follow Him, than unhesitatingly he left home and everything and followed the Saviour. If he had not done so, or if he had delayed, who knows if a second call would have reached him, and if he would not have gone to eternal destruction? God calls you already so long to follow Him, to do penance, to correct your life, to manifest greater fervor in His service, to avoid all occasions of evil, to break off all sinful associations, to confess your evil deeds, to restore what you have no right to possess, to repair the reputation of your neighbor, which you have injured by your slanders, etc. He calls you by an inner voice, and by your confessor, or through sermons. Why do you not follow Him? Why do you delay from day to day? Oh! take heed, that the menace of God be not verified in you: "I called and you refused: I stretched out my hand and there was none that regarded. You have despised all my counsel, and have neglected my reprehensions. I will also laugh at your destruction." (Prov. i.) If you do not wish to become yourself an example of this dreadful menace, resolve to-day to follow the call of your God, and to act according to His exhortations. Delay not longer, or He may cease to invite you, and you will go to destruction.

II. The heathen tyrant endeavored to incite St. Christopher to the vice of unchastity, through two wicked women, because he thought that this would be the best way to

lead him from Christianity. The same means were tried by other tyrants, with others of the faithful. Christopher, however, who desired to remain true to his faith, was not to be seduced. Heed it well. Unchastity is the way which leads to the loss of the true faith, hence to hell. Those who become addicted to this terrible vice, begin slowly to doubt several points of faith, until they have persuaded themselves that the sin they commit is not so great as is preached from the pulpit, but only a human weakness which God could not and would not punish with hell. Whoever reasons in this manner, has ceased to be a Catholic, as he does not believe everything God teaches us by His holy Church. The true faith of the heart is already lost, although apparently he may still belong to the Church of Christ. With faith, heaven is lost, but hell remains. "He that believes not shall be condemned," says Christ. (John, iii.; Mark, xvi.) Ponder well these words, and if you are free from this vice, give thanks to the Almighty, and, following the example of Christopher, let nothing seduce you. But if you are a slave to it, tear yourself away from it, if you will truly deserve the name of Catholic, and escape everlasting fire. "No man is more ready to despise God, more audacious in criminal deeds, more hardened in sin, more inflexible to repentance, and nearer to hell, than he who lives an unchaste life," writes St. Thomas of Villanova.

THE TWENTY-SIXTH DAY OF JULY.

ST. ANNE, MOTHER OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

St. Anne, the mother of the Blessed Virgin, was a native of Bethlehem, a city two miles distant from Jerusalem, frequently mentioned in Holy Writ. Having passed her youth in unstained purity, she was married to a man named Joachim, who was born at Nazareth in Galilee, with whom she lived in such love and harmony, and at the same time so piously, that one could justly say of them what St. Luke writes of Zachary and Elizabeth: "They were both just before God, walking in all the commandments and justifications of the Lord without blame." They divided their income into three parts, the first of which was used for the honor of God and to adorn the Temple, the second to assist the poor, and the third for their own subsistence. They employed the day in prayer, work suitable to their station in life, and charitable deeds.

Their only grief was, that, although so long married, they had no issue; and a barren marriage was at that time considered a disgrace, nay almost a sign of a divine curse. Saddened by this sorrow, St. Anne, as well as her spouse, prayed with many sighs and tears, that God would take pity on them and remove the disgrace that was weighing them down. But when, after having prayed long and earnestly, they were not heard, they determined to bear patiently the will of the Almighty. As, however, St. Anne knew that God required continual prayer, and that He had not given to men a certain time to ask for grace, she ceased not to implore heaven with great confidence, for all that she believed was for His honor and her own salvation. Being one day in the Temple, she felt her distress so deeply, that she wept bitterly, but she remembered, at the same time, that there had been another Anne, spouse of Elcana, who had been afflicted as she was, but whose prayers God at last had answered, making her the mother of the great prophet Samuel. While thinking of this, she perceived in herself an invincible desire to beg the Lord for a like grace. Hence she repeated her prayer with earnest fervor, promising at the same time, that if God would grant her a child, she would consecrate it in the Temple to His divine service, as the above-mentioned Anne had done.

God answered the trusting, tearful prayer of His servant, and sent her, according to the opinion of the Holy Fathers, an angel, who announced to her that she would give birth to a child which,

blessed among women, would become the mother of the long-expected Saviour of the world. It is also believed that the angel told St. Anne the name which she should give to the blessed fruit of her womb. The same revelation was made to St. Joachim, and the happiness of both and their gratitude to the Almighty can be easily imagined. Their happiness was crowned when St. Anne gave birth to her who was elected by God from all eternity to become the mother of His only Son. Who can describe the joy with which Anne pressed her newborn child to her heart, or the solicitude and love with which she brought it up? The knowledge that her blessed daughter was chosen by God to so great a dignity was incentive enough to leave nothing undone for her welfare. The mind of the blessed child was so far beyond her years, and her whole being so angelically innocent, that her education was an easy task, and St. Anne deemed herself the happiest mother in the world, because God had entrusted to her so priceless a child. The graces which, through the presence of the Blessed Virgin, she received from Heaven, cannot but have been innumerable. For if, in after times, the house of Elizabeth and Zachary was, by a visit from Mary, filled with heavenly blessings, who can doubt that St. Anne, who was the mother of the Blessed Virgin, was gifted with extraordinary graces? Knowing, however, that Mary was not only a precious treasure lent her by heaven, but also had consecrated herself to the service of the Almighty, St. Anne did not fail to return to God what she had received from Him and to offer willingly what she had so willingly promised. Hardly had Mary reached the age of three years, when Anne and Joachim went with her to the temple at Jerusalem, and presenting her to the Priest, consecrated her through him to the Almighty. Nothing could have been more painful to the pious parents than to separate from so perfect a child; but as they were more zealous for the glory of God than for their own joy, even though it was so pious, they made this sacrifice without complaining. Thus Mary was received among the number of those who, under the direction of the priests, served God in the Temple, and were led in the path of virtue. After they had piously offered this agreeable sacrifice, the parents of the Blessed Virgin returned home, and spent the remainder of their days in good works, which were continued by St. Anne, when she became a widow by the death of her holy spouse. As she had been an example to the virgins before her marriage, as well as a perfect model of a wife, so also was she in her widowhood, a shining light, for all those qualities which St. Paul afterwards required of a Christian widow, in his first Epistle to Timothy. She went frequently to

Jerusalem to see her holy daughter, and died, according to several authors, in the 79th year of her age. Mary, who at that time still lived in the temple, closed her eyes.

As one cannot give to the Blessed Virgin a higher title than to call her Mother of God, thus St. Anne cannot be more exalted than when she is called the mother of her who bore the Son of God. And for the very reason that she was chosen to be her mother, we must believe that the Almighty favored her here upon earth, with grace above all the Saints, and raised her to high glory in heaven. Hence we may rightly suppose, that her intercession with God is most powerful; and this is also testified by many examples.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. When St. Anne perceived that, notwithstanding her many prayers, the Almighty gave her no issue, she submitted to His divine will, and bore her trial with patience. Thus also should Christian people act, when God proves them in a similar manner, for all He does is the best for them. He has His reasons for acting thus, and these reasons are just. Perhaps they would go to perdition if they had children, as many a parent sins greatly in regard to his children, and is condemned on their account. When St. Anne at length received from God what she had so constantly prayed for during many years, she gave due thanks to Him, educated her daughter piously, and early consecrated her to the service of Heaven. Thus should all Christian parents act. Their greatest care should be to teach their children early to serve God and bring them up for heaven. If one of their children has a calling for a religious life, they must not oppose it, nor, by any unrighteous means, keep the child from it. St. Anne deprived herself of the great comfort which her daughter's presence gave her, when for the love of God, she consecrated her, by the hands of the

priest, to the service of the Most High. Why shall not Christian parents do the same and willingly consecrate their child to God, to whom it belongs much more than to themselves? They may commit great sin, and may even draw upon themselves eternal condemnation, and may be the cause of their child's destruction, if they oppose the divine call.

II. St. Anne prayed long, yet was not heard. She, however, complained not against God, but continued in her prayers with undiminished confidence until she at last received what she had asked. God has many reasons for not always hearing our prayers immediately. We sometimes pray when we are not in a state of grace; or we live in sin without repenting, or without the intention of bettering our life. In such cases, our prayers cannot be acceptable to God. We also sometimes pray without devotion and reverence. And can such a prayer have power? At another time, we pray only for things which God knows to be hurtful to us, although we may imagine that they are for our good. In such cases, God bestows a grace upon us by not hearing us. Often also the

Almighty does not hear us, in punishment of our iniquities. We have so often offended Him, and have forfeited His grace, that we cannot reasonably expect that He should grant our request immediately. We have so frequently been deaf when God called to us; how can we ask that He should directly hear us? "What right have we," asks St. Salvianus, "to complain, when God does not hear us, or, so to speak, despises our prayers when we have so often not listened to Him, and so frequently despised His laws? What is more just than that He should not listen to us, because we heard not Him, and that He should despise our prayers, as we did His laws?" Further, God does not always hear us im-

mediately, in order that we may pray more fervently and esteem so much more highly the favors He bestows. He does it also to try our patience and our trust in His mercy, or that we may be more deserving of His grace by continual prayers. Finally, besides other reasons, He may do it also to give us something better than we asked for. When all this is rightly considered, tell me, can you justly complain when the Almighty hears not your prayers immediately? Continue in them. Perform them in the right spirit, and you will experience the truth of the words of St. Bernard: "God either gives us what we ask, or something else, which is more useful to us."

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY OF JULY.

ST. PANTALEON, MARTYR.—ST. COLOMBINI.

Nicomedia, a city in Bithynia, was the birth-place of St. Pantaleon. His mother, Eubula, was a Christian, but Eustorgius, his father, a heathen. The former died before he was baptized, and the latter reared him in the darkness of idolatry, and instructed him carefully in the same. Pantaleon, whose appearance was prepossessing, and who, besides this, was gifted with great talents, studied medicine and acquired such knowledge, that he not only gained the esteem of the lower classes, but also stood in great favor with the Emperor Galerius Maximian. At that period there lived in the same city a pious and zealous priest, named Hermolaus, who, on account of the persecutions, secretly instructed the Christians, and encouraged them to remain faithful to Christ. Having sought an opportunity to become acquainted with Pantaleon, he conversed one day with him upon the art of healing certain diseases; and on this occasion spoke of the true God, adding that by calling on Jesus Christ, as the Lord of life and death, one could heal diseases much better than by human remedies; that even the dead could be restored to life, if it so pleased the Lord, and one called upon Him with due confidence. Hermolaus confirmed his words by

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relating several examples of miraculous cases and restoration to life, and exhorted Pantaleon most earnestly to become one of the number of those who believed in Christ, and who worshipped no other God in heaven or on earth. Pantaleon was deeply impressed by the words of the pious priest, and promised to consider carefully all he had heard. One day, while he was occupied with the thought whether all was true that Hermolaus had told him, he found on his way a dead child, and near it a viper, which probably had killed the child. Remembering what he had heard of the omnipotence of the God of the Christians, he was filled with trust in Him, and said to the dead child: "I command thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, rise!" and to the viper: "And be thou punished for having killed this poor child!" At the same moment, the dead child arose to his feet, and the viper burst before his eyes. Amazed at this evident miracle, Pantaleon went forthwith to Hermolaus, related to him what had just occurred, and humbly begged for holy baptism, which he received after having been sufficiently instructed in the faith of Christ. Not satisfied with his own conversion, he endeavored also to bring his father to the knowledge of the true God, and took every opportunity to speak to him of the falsity of those idols which were so devoutly worshipped and on account of which the Christians, who refused to sacrifice to them, were so cruelly persecuted. God so ordered, that just at a time when he was thus conversing with his father, a blind man came to him, who bitterly complained that the physicians, instead of healing his eyes, had entirely deprived him of his sight, and asked him if he could help him. "Will you promise me to embrace the Christian faith if I restore your sight?" asked Pantaleon. "I will," replied the blind man. Then Pantaleon, making the sign of the holy cross over him, said: "In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, open thine eyes!" And the man, opening his eyes, saw. This miracle opened the inner eyes of Pantaleon's father, those eyes with which we recognize God. Seeing that the words of his son were true, he said to him: "I must believe now that the God of the Christians is the only true God." Inexpressibly happy, Pantaleon went, with his father and the man who had been blind, to the pious priest, who instructed and baptized both. Pantaleon's father, soon after, died and left his great wealth to his son, who sold the greatest part of it and divided the money among the poor, that he might have more leisure to prepare himself for the struggle which he knew was awaiting him, being convinced that he would have to suffer greatly when his conversion came to the knowledge of the Emperor. Meanwhile, he gave all his care to the sick, healing many of them by merely making the sign of the cross over them, and

thus converting them to the Christian faith. The other physicians envied the Saint, on account of his many cures, and, fearing that he would gradually draw all the sick to himself, they resolved to put him out of the way. They, therefore, denounced him to the Emperor as a Christian who cured the sick by the usual magic of his sect. They particularly related how he had, not long before, restored sight to a blind man. The Emperor called this man into his presence, and asked him how, and by whom his sight had been restored. The man told the simple truth, that Pantaleon, by calling upon Christ, had immediately given him back his sight, adding that he had recognized, by this fact, that the God of the Christians was the only true God, and hence had resolved to worship Him only. The Emperor became so incensed at these words, that he ordered this fearless confessor of Christ to be beheaded without loss of time. He then had Pantaleon brought, and asked him if it was true that he was a Christian. Pantaleon, without hesitation, confessed his faith, and represented the falsity of the heathen gods so clearly, that neither the Emperor nor any of those present could bring an argument against him. At the conclusion of his speech, he said that he was ready to prove the truth of his God, and the vanity of the heathen idols. "Let them bring," said he, "a sick person, of whose recovery there is no hope. Then call all the idolatrous priests, in order that they may pray to their gods, while I will ask the aid of my God; and then we shall see whether your gods are able to restore the sick man to health. I know that my God has the power." They accepted this proposition, and brought an incurable paralytic man. The priests began to call on all their gods, one after another, as in ancient times the priests of Baal had done in the presence of King Achab and the holy prophet Elias. But the sick man's health did not improve. After the idolaters had for a long time vainly endeavored to receive help from their gods, the Christian physician stepped forward, and, after saying a short prayer, he made the sign of the cross over the sick man, and said with a loud voice: "In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, rise, restored to health." And at the same time the paralyzed man arose and cried: "There is no other God but the God of the Christians!" This miracle soon became known all over the city, and induced many heathens to join the faithful. The Emperor, however, provoked beyond measure by the idolatrous priests against Pantaleon, commanded that he should be first tortured and afterwards beheaded. Hermolaus, who was not less faithful to Christ than Pantaleon, was beheaded at the same time. Both received the crown of martyrdom in the 305th year of the Christian era.



To the short life of the holy martyr, I will add a few words about a holy confessor, St. John Colombini, founder of the Order of Jesuati. He was a native of Sienna, in Tuscany, and his parents were of the celebrated family of the Colombini. Having attained to manhood he married a noble lady, named Blasia, who gave him a son and a daughter. The son was called in early life to a better world; the daughter took the habit in a convent. St. John, by his talents, raised himself to the highest offices in the city. He amassed great riches, particularly by commerce, which at that period was, for the most part, in the hands of the nobility. His greatest care was daily to increase his fortune. He himself confessed, after his conversion, that the low ambition of gaining riches had taken deep root in his heart, from which only the mercy of God had at length freed him. The cause of his conversion was as follows:—He returned one day to his home earlier than usual, and as he found the dinner not yet ready, he became so angry that he threw everything down that was in his way, and cursed and swore in a most frightful manner. Blasia, his spouse, excused herself as well as she could, and gave him the *Lives of the Saints* that he might read until the dinner was ready. But Colombini cast the book from him, and continued to give vent to his ill-humor. When he had exhausted his fury, he repented of having treated the book so badly, and, taking it up, he began to read. God so disposed it that he opened it at the description of the conversion of St. Mary of Egypt. At first, he read only to pass away the time, but gradually he became so deeply interested in it, that his dinner had to wait for him. He felt a change in his heart, and once having resolved to lead a better life, he went immediately to work. After having made a general confession, he visited the church oftener, gave more time to prayer, and practised other good works with greater zeal than he had formerly done. As he knew that he had done great wrong by his inordinate ambition and love of money, he became extremely generous to the poor, and sought all possible means to make himself despised by others. With the permission of his spouse, he took the vow of chastity, mortified his body by watching, fasting and other penances, and allowed himself not even the most innocent recreation. The costly garments which he had worn until now, in accordance with his station, he put aside, and substituted very plain ones, and he frequently visited the hospitals, waiting most tenderly on the sick. Many thought this sudden change in his conduct ridiculous, and others believed him insane, while others again derided and mocked him. Even Blasia, his pious spouse,

could at last no longer endure his changed conduct, and told him to remember who he was, and not make himself an object of contempt to the whole city. Perceiving, however, that she could not induce him to alter his conduct, she commenced to scold and deride him, as the wife of the patient Job had done. This lasted until, one day, she saw, through an opening of the door, that Colombini was surrounded by a divine light during his prayer. From that moment she began to esteem his virtues and joined him in practices of piety. Colombini, whom neither the reproaches of Blasia, nor those of many others, had disturbed, had, in the mean time, found several persons who assisted him in serving the sick and other works of charity. The first of these was Francis Vincent, one of the most aristocratic men of the city, who gave all his possessions to the poor, and submitted himself to the direction of Colombini. Both one day went to the Cathedral to assist at holy mass. At the door of the sacred edifice, they saw a beggar who was covered with ulcers. St. Colombini took him upon his shoulder, carried him into his house, laid him on his own bed, and requested Blasia to wait on him until he himself should return from church. Blasia went into the room where the beggar had been laid, but when she opened the door so delightful a fragrance streamed out of it that, perplexed and astonished, she had not the heart to enter. When Colombini returned home after mass, he immediately perceived the same refreshing odor, but when he and Blasia went to see the sick man, they found the bed empty. Both were filled with surprise, but, a few days later, Christ our Lord appeared to the Saint, revealing to him that it had been He whom he had so kindly treated. This animated the Saint to still greater love to the poor and sick, and also to a greater desire to live a perfect life. Hence he deprived himself of all his possessions, lived on alms, gave to the sick all possible aid, and endeavored to win others for equal works of Christian love. He was never weary of doing good, but was always full of fervent zeal. More than sixty men, all either of noble blood or noble by education and learning, became imitators of his holy life.

With these he founded a new Order, which was confirmed by Pope Urban V. The members of this order were called Jesuati, because they constantly had the holy Name of Jesus in their mouth. It is related of the holy founder, that he was often heard to say, while employed in his usual deeds of kindness:—"Long live Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ be blessed and praised through all eternity!" As long as the holy man lived at Sienna after his conversion, so long did he endeavor to draw others by devout discourses, not only from sin and vice, but also from the

love of all dangerous enjoyments. God gifted him with great powers of persuasion; for it is known that he not only converted many hardened sinners, but also reformed the conduct of a great number of young men of the nobility. But on this account he suffered much from persecution. Finally, he was accused of being a disturber of the peace of many families, and was ordered to leave the city. The Saint, rejoicing to have the opportunity to suffer for the love of God, left the city without a murmur, and went to Rome to receive the confirmation of his Order. The Almighty, however, did not allow the wrong done to His servant to go unpunished. A terrible storm, accompanied by thunder and lightning, which filled all the inhabitants with fear and trembling, took place at his departure. This was soon followed by divers diseases, by which a great many lost their lives; and the people unhesitatingly said that God had sent this punishment because they had driven His servant away, and they rested not until he was most humbly requested to return. The Saint sent some of his companions back, but he himself continued on his way to Rome. When he had happily concluded his affairs, he started for home, but reached it not; for, while on his way, he was seized by a fever on the Feast of St. Mary Magdalen. He desired to receive the last sacraments, and when the holy Eucharist was brought into his room, he gathered all his strength, and, rising from his bed, he adored his Saviour on bended knees, made a public confession of his faith, and after the most devout exercises, he received the blessed Sacrament with angelical piety. He then gave his religious the most wholesome exhortations, had the passion of Christ read aloud, and ended his holy life on the 31st of July, 1367. His last words were: "Into Thy hands, O Jesus, I commend my soul." God had honored him by the gifts of prophecy and miracles. After his death, many miracles were wrought by his intercession.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. You saw in the life of St. Pantaleon how a child brought his own father to the knowledge of his error, then to the true faith and a pious life, hence to everlasting happiness. Oh! how beautiful an example! Many children are the cause of great sin, and perhaps of the damnation of their parents, because they give them, by their disobedience and bad conduct, occasion of cursing, blasphemy, anger and other sins. How

great will be their responsibility when they appear before the judgment-seat of God! If you have been one of these children, or are still one of them, repent of your fault and pray earnestly for your parents, if they are dead. Should they, however, still live, treat them with due love, honor and obedience, that you may, in some measure, atone for your past omissions. Pray often to the Almighty that He may give

grace to them and to you to live in such a manner, that you may all gain everlasting life. Should you have an opportunity to be useful to your parents in regard to their spiritual welfare, without trespassing on the respect due to them, omit not so to do; they have well deserved it of you.

II. You have observed, in the life of St. Colombini, how beneficial it is to read the Lives of the Saints. You have also heard that the Saint, in the practice of his works of charity, was never weary, but always cheerful and zealous. You sometimes commence to do good works, but do not continue in them and become tired and ill-humored. Whence is this? Is God unworthy of your continuing to do good out of love to Him? or is the reward He offers you not great enough? You surely will not dare to pretend that this is the case. What then? Perhaps it

is too slow in coming? But who knows if death be not standing before the door? Rouse yourself, then, and continue with energy in the good works you have begun; and if coldness, dissatisfaction, or weariness comes over your spirit, say to yourself: "Perhaps only a short time is left to me wherein to work out my salvation; therefore, I will faithfully continue in the work I commenced for the love of God and for the salvation of my own soul." Heaven is worth the effort, and God deserves infinitely more. "If you become weary," writes St. Bernard, "consider that to-day you are still able to do the work which to-morrow may be impossible." Think that God calls to you in the words of the Apocalypse: "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to render to every man according to his works." (Apoc. xxii.)

THE TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY OF JULY.

THE NINETEEN HOLY MARTYRS OF GORCUM.

The Roman Martyrology says, on the ninth day of this month: "At Brill, in Holland, the suffering of the nineteen martyrs of Gorcum, who, for defending the authority of the Roman Church and the real presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, were derided and tormented by the Calvinists, and ended their martyrdom by death." The history of the martyrdom of these glorious confessors of Christ is as follows:

After Luther and Calvin had caused a great part of Germany to forsake the true faith, and devastated it by a thousand disturbances and revolutions, the inhabitants of the Netherlands began also to rise against their lawful sovereign, the King of Spain, in order to extort the so-called "Liberty of conscience." The Prince William of Orange, the Count de la Mark, the Count of Lumaye, the Prince of Nassau and the Duke of Bergen assisted these rebels, who at first were called "Geussen," or beggars. In 1572, they took by force the towns of Brill, Utrecht and others,

and attacked Gorcum. The Spanish Governor, Gaspar Turk; retired into the castle, as also the two priests of the town, the Franciscans, who had a convent there, and a few other Catholics. The chief of the Calvinists, after having taken the small town, demanded the surrender of the castle, with the declaration on oath, that all persons, lay or clerical, should be allowed to pass out unmolested. It became, however, manifest that those who are not true to their God cannot be trusted, should they even seal their promise with an oath. They dragged the commanding officer bound in chains into the prison, and hung a Catholic citizen, who had called one of the Calvinists a thief, because he had stolen a chalice from the church. The other Catholics were threatened with all possible pains and torments.

The greatest rage of the heretics, however, discharged itself upon the clergy. They were all cast into a frightful dungeon. At dinner time, meat was placed before them, but as it was Friday, they were convinced that the heretics would regard it as a sign that they had forsaken their faith if they partook of it; hence they resolved rather to starve than to transgress the laws of the church. Only one of them, who thought that he was not doing wrong in eating meat under the circumstances, did so, and thereby lost the crown of martyrdom. The suffering of the imprisoned clergy is not to be described; the heretic soldiers came as often as they pleased to them, and maltreated them in all possible ways. Sometimes they buffeted them, spurned them with their feet, whipped them barbarously, and threatened to crucify them all. On the very first evening of their imprisonment, one of the most wicked came to them and ordered the "black coats," meaning the secular priests, to come forward. Leonard Wechel, the oldest of them, believing that his last hour had arrived, went fearlessly up, and kneeling down, bared his neck to receive the fatal stroke. The soldier, however, demanded only money, and when they had satisfied his demand, he retired. Nicholas Poppel, a younger priest, had not so much lenity shown him, on account of his having preached with great zeal against heresy. One of the soldiers placed a pistol to his mouth, saying: "How is it, Pastor, you have so often said in the pulpit that you were ready to die for your faith; are you still of the same opinion?" "Yes," replied Nicholas, "I rejoice to give my life for my faith, and especially for the chief doctrine which you reject—the real presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist." The heretic, surprised at this fearless confession, desired to know where the treasures of the castle were secreted. As Nicholas knew nothing about them, he was dismissed after a long torture. It was now the turn of the Franciscans. The soldiers took the

girdle from the Father Guardian, laid it around his neck, and swung him on a door, up and down, until the girdle broke and the Father sank upon the floor without a sign of life. To ascertain if he was yet alive, they took a burning candle and held it close to every part of his face, and even put it into his open mouth. As no sign of life appeared, they said: "It is only a monk; nobody will miss him." The Father, however, slowly regained consciousness, and animated all his fellow-sufferers to remain faithful in their approaching martyrdom.

The following day, the heretics renewed their cruelties upon these constant confessors of Christ. Among other ill-treatments, they buffeted them in such a manner that the blood flowed both from mouth and nostrils. Willehad, a Franciscan, ninety years of age, said, after every stroke: "Thanks be to God!" On another day, they led them, bound two and two together, out of the prison, and forced them to sing the "Te Deum Laudamus," as if in a procession, to the amusement and derision of the other soldiers, who were sitting at table. After this, they brought dice to them, saying that they should throw them and see which should be first hung. "There needs no casting dice," said the Father Guardian, "I am ready, and have already had a foretaste of hanging." The godless men, astonished in spite of themselves at such heroism, contented themselves with abusing the holy church and the clergy, and sent the prisoners back to their dungeon. Meanwhile the Catholic citizens of Gorcum, in great indignation at such lawless acts, firmly demanded of the commanding officer of the "Beggars" that he should keep his oath and release the Catholics, as well the clergy as the laity. A deputation was also sent to the Prince of Orange, to request him to enforce the fulfilment of the promise made at the surrender of the castle. The Calvinists, who knew that the Prince would act in accordance with the treaty, resolved not to wait for his order, but sent all the ecclesiastics to Brill, to the Count of Lumaye, who was an embittered enemy of the Catholic clergy. They were therefore placed, during the night, on board of a boat and taken to Brill, where the Count received them with a storm of invectives and abuse. A gallows stood upon the banks of the river, not far from Brill, around which the prisoners, two and two, had to walk three times, and finally to kneel down and sing the "Salve Regina." The same they were forced to do in the market-place of the town, where another gallows had been erected. They had to sing the litany of the Saints there, during which they were buffeted and whipped so severely, that Father Van Vic, a stately man, said: "What kind of people are these? I have been a prisoner to both Turks and Saracens, but have never received

such treatment." After this, the prisoners were cast into a dark and filthy dungeon. In the afternoon of the same day, they were brought into court and asked if they would forsake their religion. Three of them answered timidly, and were separated from the others, who were all ready to die for their religion. The next day, only seven of the most distinguished of them were called into the court, and were asked only to deny the authority of the Pope, and the presence of Christ in the Blessed Eucharist. But the servants of the Almighty, indignant at this wicked demand, said they would rather endure all kinds of torments than deny the least of the articles of the Catholic faith. The zealous priest, Leonard, also made a speech, the boldness of which so confounded the president, that he knew not what to answer. The Count of Lumaye, enraged at this, sentenced them all to die, and although the order of the Prince of Orange had arrived to give the prisoners their liberty in accordance with the treaty, he changed not his resolution, but commanded the sentence to be executed that very night.

At one o'clock in the morning of the 9th of July, 1572, the fearless Christian heroes were led out of the town to the convent of Ruggen, which lately had been plundered by the Calvinists. The martyrs were gathered into a large barn, which was traversed by two heavy beams. At the sight of the place where they were to receive the crown of martyrdom, they all rejoiced, and encouraged each other not to falter in their fidelity to Christ. The Father Guardian was the first whom the heretics hung to one of the beams, wantonly tormenting him the while. He spoke words of comfort to his companions as long as he could speak. After his death, they strangled in a similar manner the remaining eighteen. Eleven of them were of the Seraphic Order of Franciscans; one, John of Asterwick, belonged to the Order of the Canons Regular of St. Augustine; two were of the Premonstratensian Order; one was a Dominican; and the other four secular priests, two of Gorcum, two from elsewhere. When Father Van Vic was ascending the ladder, a Calvinist preacher came near him to persuade him to deny his faith; but the Father, in his holy zeal, spurned him with his foot from the ladder, which prevented others from further molesting them. Thus did these nineteen valiant confessors of Christ end their lives, and receive the glorious crown of martyrdom.

The heretics spared not even the dead bodies, but cutting off their noses, ears and other members, placed hats and helmets on them and treated them with wanton disrespect. We must not omit to mention the sad ending of some of the fellow-

prisoners of these holy martyrs. A lay-brother yielded to the demands of the Calvinists, at the very moment when he was to be executed, and thus escaped death. He happily repented, after some time, and returned to the true Church. More unhappy was the pastor of Marsdam. He denied the authority of the Pope, and consented to obey all the demands of the heretics. These, however, not believing him, hung him without mercy. Just as unhappy was the end of a religious. Already with his foot on the ladder, he renounced the true faith and enrolled himself among the soldiers. Only three months later, he was accused of poisoning the officer on whom he waited; and thus, as miscreant, he suffered the same death on the gallows, which he could have died as a glorious martyr.

The martyrdom of these holy confessors of the Catholic faith took place in 1572. Their holy relics were bought, for a large sum of money, from the Count of Lumaye, and were transported to Catholic places. God honored them by many miracles. On the night of their execution, they all appeared, arrayed in bright shining garments and precious crowns upon their heads, to the honorable Matthew Torano, of Gorcum, who at that moment was sending to the throne of the Almighty, his prayers for the welfare of his country.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

How cruelly did the wickedness of heresy deal with these holy martyrs, although they were all persons consecrated to God! And why were they thus cruelly treated? Because they were Catholics, and would not deny a single article of their faith. Was that a reason for such barbarity? Liberty belongs to all. Liberty of conscience is, in the opinion of the heretics, a precious jewel, for the possession of which they have fought so many bloody battles, and have occasioned so much evil. They, however, esteem it only when it is to their own advantage. May God open the eyes of all that are blinded by error, and may His grace prepare their hearts to receive the truth and save so many noble souls from eternal destruction! Let us now consider the lives of the holy martyrs,

in which we shall find two points especially, which are greatly to their honor, and which will serve for our instruction.

I. The holy martyrs chose to die, rather than deny a single article of their faith. This was their duty; for, heed it well: whoever denies one article of the true faith, or doubts it voluntarily, violates the whole faith, and ceases to be a Catholic before God. For, he only is a Catholic, who is baptized and believes everything that God, by His Church, proposes to him to believe. Heed it well; everything, without exception. Oh! how greatly do I fear that many, who are called Catholics, have long ceased to be such before God. Their faith is lost, because they doubt sometimes this, sometimes the other article, and thus side partly with the

Catholics, partly with those who are not Catholics. Sometimes they believe not in purgatory; at another time they doubt that punishment in the other world is eternal. At this moment, they cannot believe that God condemns man for the crime of unchastity, at the next, they strongly doubt that the Almighty knows everything, and rules all things. Be not seduced by such as would make you doubt the least article of your faith. You must believe everything that God, by His Holy Church, bids you believe; otherwise you are no Catholic, do not belong to the true Church, and have no hope of salvation. Thomas is called by Christ, "unbelieving," because he would not believe the one article of the resurrection. "Be not faithless but believing." (John, xx.) Hence you belong to the unbelievers, if you doubt or deny a single article of faith. And why will you doubt one when you believe in others? The same God who revealed the article which you believe, has also revealed those you doubt or deny. The true Church assures you of this fact. Why then do you believe God in this and not in the other? Can He err in one, and not in the other? How terrible a wickedness it would be only to think so!

II. The holy martyrs preferred to suffer hunger and thirst and torments rather than trespass against the laws of the Church by eating meat. This was also their duty, as the heretics would have looked upon their eating meat on a Friday, as a sign of their forsaking the true faith or as a contempt of the Church. Whoever will be an obedient child

of the Church, must act in like manner, if he will not be condemned; as he is obliged to confess his faith not only with the lips, but by works. Woe to those who in the eyes of the heretics, wantonly transgress the laws of the Church, or perhaps even deride them like the heretics! They will one day experience what has been so often preached, but at which they smiled; that one commits great sin, and is in danger of being condemned by trespassing against the laws of the Church. If you will gain salvation keep away from the wicked rebels and despisers of the Church. You know the words of Christ: "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as a heathen and a publican." (Matthew, xviii.) Can you promise a heathen salvation? If you say, with the rebels and scoffers, that it is enough when one keeps the commandments of God, I ask you: are you not obliged, by virtue of the laws of God, to keep the commandments of the Church, as you are, by virtue of them, obliged to keep the laws of a legitimate, temporal authority? Or can you trespass against the laws of the Church, without effectually trespassing against the laws of God, who has so peremptorily and under the greatest penalty, commanded all to obey His Church, and who has said so distinctly: "He that despiseth you, despiseth me!" (Luke, x.) "For they have not rejected thee, but me." (I. Kings, xiii.) Hence, you reject God by trespassing against the laws of the Church. Do you believe that you can thus save your soul?

TWENTY-NINTH DAY OF JULY.

ST. MARTHA, VIRGIN.

St. Martha, more than once mentioned in the Gospel, was born of illustrious parents. Her father was of Syria, her mother of Judæa, and after their death, she inherited their house and estate at Bethany. She exercised herself freely in good works, especially in those of charity, and was one of the first women who, by attending the instructions of Christ, and by His miracles, recognized in Him the true Messiah. From that hour her heart was filled with the most devoted love to the Lord, who, according to the Gospel, returned her pious affection. The conversion of her sister Magdalen, which has been related in the life of this Saint, was in a great measure her work, as she persuaded her to hear Christ's sermons. After Magdalen's conversion, she and Martha accompanied Christ from place to place, desiring not to lose any of His divine instructions. Frequently had Martha the grace to receive our Lord into her house, and to see Him sitting at her table. One day, being so honored, she prepared, with her own hands, everything that she would set before our Saviour, anxious that He should be served well. Seeing that her sister Magdalen meanwhile sat quietly at the feet of Christ, without assisting her, she, mildly complaining, said to the Saviour: "Lord, hast thou no care that my sister hath left me alone to serve? Speak to her, therefore, that she help me." Christ reproached her somewhat for her too great solicitude for temporal things, with these words, fraught with deep meaning: "Martha, Martha; thou art careful and art troubled about many things; but one thing is necessary; Mary has chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her." Martha humbly received this kind reproof, this wholesome lesson, and when Christ was at table with Lazarus and Magdalen, she served Him, thinking rightly that this was the greatest honor that could be bestowed upon her. Shortly before the Passion of the Saviour, Lazarus, her brother, became dangerously sick. She immediately sent a messenger to Christ to announce this to Him, in the following words: "He whom thou lovest is sick." Both sisters thought this would be enough to induce Christ to come and heal him. But, as our Lord desired, by raising Lazarus from the dead, to give a still greater proof of His power, He came not until Lazarus was buried. Martha went to meet Him when she heard of His arrival, and said: "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had

not died. But now, also, I know that whatever thou wilt ask of God, He will give it to Thee." Christ said to her: "Thy brother shall rise again." "I know," said Martha, "that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." "I am the resurrection and the life," said Christ; "he that believeth on Me, although he be dead, shall live; and every one that liveth and believeth in me, shall not die forever. Believest thou this?" She answered: "Yes, Lord, I believe that Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God, who art come into the world." When she had said this, she entered into her house and announced to her sister the arrival of Christ. Rising hastily, Mary went with her to Him. What further took place will be related in the life of St. Lazarus. It will be sufficient to say here, that our Saviour, deeply moved by the tears and prayers of the two sisters, called Lazarus again to life, who had been in his grave four days. The joy of Martha and Magdalen was beyond measure, and the expression of their gratitude touching and humble. Nothing more is said of Martha in the Gospel, but it is not doubted that she was, with the other pious women, on Mount Calvary at the time of the Saviour's Passion, and later also present at His Ascension, and the coming of the Holy Ghost. All her biographers agree in the fact that, in the persecution of the Christians, she was placed by the Jews, with her brother and sister, in a boat which had neither sail nor oar, and was cast adrift on the high sea to perish. But God was their pilot, and guided them to Marseilles, in France, where they safely landed. Magdalen, some time later, went into a desert, where she led a penitential life for thirty years. Martha, however, after having converted many virgins to the Christian faith by her kind exhortations, and instilled into them a love of virginal chastity, selected a secluded place between Asignon and Arles, where she erected a dwelling. There she lived with her maid Marcella and several virgins, who desired, like herself, to spend their days far from the tumult of the world, in chastity and peace, and to lead a cloistral life; whence St. Martha is by many regarded, if not as the first founder, yet as a model of a religious life. She was a guide to all, and her example served as a rule to them whereby to regulate their conduct. Thirty years she lived thus in great austerity, abstaining from meat and wine. She was devoted to prayer, and it is written of her, that she threw herself upon her knees to pray one hundred times during the day and as often during the night. Her virginal chastity she preserved until her death, the hour of which was revealed to her a year before she departed. A fever which seized her, and lasted until she died, was regarded by her as a means to become more like her Saviour and increase her merits. Hence

she was always cheerful in her suffering, bearing it with angelic patience. Eight days before she died, she heard heavenly music, and saw the soul of her sister, accompanied by many angels, ascend to heaven, which not only filled her soul with divine joy, but also with the fervent desire soon to be re-united with Christ. The Saviour Himself deigned to appear to her, saying: "Come, beloved one; as thou hast received Me in thy terrestrial home, so will I receive thee now in My heavenly mansion." St. Martha was transported with joy, and the nearer the hour of her death approached, the more fervent became her prayers and her desire to be with God. Shortly before her end, she desired to be laid upon the ground, which was strewn with ashes, and after having given her last instructions to those under her, she raised her eyes to heaven and gave her virgin soul to the Almighty, while she pronounced the words her beloved Saviour had spoken: "Lord, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." Her tomb has been glorified by God with many miracles, and is held in great veneration.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Without doubt, you think St. Martha greatly blessed because she had the high honor to receive our Lord into her house and to serve Him. But why do you not estimate your own much greater happiness? Who is He, whom you receive in Holy Communion, in a much more excellent manner, than Martha received Him? Is He not the same Jesus who went into her house? He comes more frequently to you—or is ready to do so—than He ever visited Martha. Ah! recognize this great blessing and use it to your salvation. May you also prepare yourself most assiduously to receive your Lord, and to serve Him well, in order that He may one day receive you into His kingdom. To receive Holy Communion is one of the most effectual means to gain salvation. "He that eateth this bread shall live for ever," says Christ. (John, vi.) Live, then, in this world, in sanctifying grace, and live in heaven, in the presence of the Almighty.

II. Martha lived an austere life

during thirty years, prayed day and night, preserved her chastity, constantly practised good works, and suffered sickness with cheerful patience. Whoever lives thus, may well say at the end of his days: "Lord, into thy hands I commend my spirit." But whoever employs neither his mind, his body, nor his soul in the service of God, who gratifies every wish of the body and stains his soul with sin, without trying to purify it again, who is indolent in doing good works, who uses the members of the body, the faculties of the mind, more to offend God than to serve Him; who manifests no patience in sickness and trial, who detests penance and austerities; who seldom prays, and is unchaste; cannot truly say with confidence, in his last hour: "Lord, into thy hands I commend my spirit." For, how can he hope that God will receive into His hands a soul, which, during a whole lifetime, was rather in the hands of Satan than in those of the Almighty, a soul which lived more

according to the will of Satan than the will of God ; and, finally, a soul which gave not the body, that clothed it, to the service of the Most High ? " He is too arrogant," writes St. Gregory of Nyssa, " who having, during his life, constantly warred against the Almighty by sin and vice, hopes, like another Moses, to die in the arms of the Lord." If you desire, therefore, at your last moment, to commend your soul into the hands of your Saviour with a well-founded hope that He will receive it, employ now your mind and all the faculties of your soul, in the service of your God, as Martha did.

To this effect is the admonition of St. Peter : " They shall commend their souls in good deeds to the faithful Creator." (I. Peter, iv.) If we commend now our mind, our soul to God with good deeds, we can commend it at the end of our lives to Him, with the certain hope of salvation. Now, while on this earth, we must serve God with soul and body ; for God has promised eternal life to His servants. If you will not do this, the promise of God was not made for you. " Whoever does not fulfil the commandments of the Lord, vainly expects what the Lord has promised," says St. Chrysostom.

THIRTIETH DAY OF JULY.

ST. LUPUS, BISHOP OF TROYES ; ST. JAMES, BISHOP OF NISIBIS.

St. Lupus was born in Lotharingia or Lorraine, not far from Metz. Having early lost his father, an uncle of his charged himself with his education. Arrived at manhood, he married a sister of the holy bishop St. Hilary ; but, with her consent, left her after seven years, as both had resolved, in future, to serve God more perfectly in retirement from the world. Hence Lupus repaired to the famous monastery at Lerins, which, in his time, was celebrated above all others on account of its discipline. He remained there one year, eagerly striving after spiritual perfection ; then went to Macon, sold his estate and gave the money to the poor. Just at that time, the episcopal See of Troyes became vacant, and a worthy successor to the late Prelate was sought for. Lupus had already gained such high repute for his virtues and remarkable learning, that the Clergy who had to choose the new bishop, hesitated not to offer him the See. He received it, humbly recognizing in the election the divine Will, and hoping to be thus able to work more effectually for the salvation of souls. This pious hope was not deceived. He preached daily to those in his charge, and instructed them with great solicitude in the true faith, and in the manner of leading a pious life ; by which means he converted many hardened sinners, strength-

ened those whose faith was weak, and animated others to be more zealous in the service of the Most High. The example of his holy life gave power and persuasion to his sermons and instructions. He occupied the greater part of the night in devotional exercises, and the few hours that he gave to sleep were not passed in a soft bed, but upon hard boards. He fasted almost daily, sometimes touched no food for several successive days; and continually wore a rough hair-shirt. The poor, the sick and prisoners received almost his entire income.

The temporal and spiritual welfare of his flock was his only pleasure, his only thought, and he guarded and watched over them like a true Shepherd and Apostle. God, however, soon sent him an opportunity to manifest his zeal in other regions.

In England, there was, in those days, a certain heretic, named Pelagius, who disseminated his doctrines everywhere, without fear or shame, and the bishops were not able to oppose him with sufficient force. Hence they wrote to the bishops of France, to send some men who could assist them in withstanding this more and more wide-spreading heresy, and to strengthen the Catholics in their faith. St. Lupus and St. Germanus, bishop of Auxerre, were chosen by the bishops of France for this holy work, and after the Pope had approved of the choice, both set out upon their journey, animated with great hope. A terrible storm which they encountered on sea, endangered the lives of all on board; but when St. Lupus poured a few drops of the sacred oil he had with him upon the foaming waves, the sea became suddenly as calm as a lake, and the holy men arrived safely in England. They immediately began their pious labor, confuted with great energy the heretical doctrines, strengthened the Catholics in their faith, and restored the former peace to the Church. Most of the heretics renounced their error, others secretly left the country. Some of them, however, sought to protect themselves by arms and called upon the Saxons to help them. This savage people came very willingly, made an inroad into the land and caused great damage by plunder and devastation. The two holy bishops, Lupus and Germanus, assembled all the Catholics, and having filled them with courage and fortitude, marched at their head against the raging enemy, attacked them fearlessly, with the repeated cry: "Hallelujah!" and thus drove them out of the land at last. After this glorious victory over the enemy of the true faith, the holy bishops made such regulations as were necessary for the preservation and protection of the Catholic Church, and then returned to France to their own Sees.

Lupus labored with his accustomed zeal in his sacred functions; but he and his flock were, after a few years, visited with

great trials. Attila, the celebrated King of the Huns, had invaded France with an immense army, devastating the country, wherever he went, with fire and sword. He came to Troyes, and St. Lupus, seeing that human aid was powerless, turned to God, and sought His help by prayers and austere penances, exhorting his flock to follow his example. When informed that Attila was approaching the city, he clothed himself in his Episcopal robes, and, accompanied by the Clergy and a great many citizens, went to meet him before the gates of the city. "Who art thou?" he said to him with fearless dignity; "who art thou, who so barbarously ragest in cities and country, devastating so many kingdoms, and laying them in dust and ashes, while endeavoring to subject them to thee?" The King answered: "I am Attila, the King of the Huns, the scourge of God." "Come on, then," said the Saint; "if thou art the scourge of God, who will be able to oppose thee? Welcome, scourge of the Almighty! Raise thyself above us and lash us as much and as long as God will permit thee!" Having thus spoken, he opened the gate of the city, and invited him to enter. But the savage heart of Attila was suddenly changed; he spared the city and requested the bishop to accompany him to the Rhine. This miraculous deliverance of the city from entire destruction won for the holy bishop the greatest esteem of all the inhabitants of the land. His flock added to the love they had always borne him the deepest veneration, and regarding him as their deliverer, knew not how to express their gratitude. After having for fifty-two years administered his pastoral functions with holy zeal, he was called, by a happy death, to receive his eternal reward.



To the above related events we will add a short sketch of the life of the holy bishop, St. James, who delivered Nisibis in a not less wonderful manner than St. Lupus had delivered Troyes. This Saint was a native of Nisibis, a city situated on the boundaries of the Roman Empire and Persia. Still young in years he left the world and chose a solitary and penitential life in a wild cave, where he spent his days in praying, fasting and other penances. At a riper age, he resolved to preach the Gospel to the heathens in Persia. Hence, leaving his abode, he journeyed to the next city, where he found before the gate a crowd of young girls who were bathing, and so immodestly, that they placed themselves in his way and abused him most disgracefully. The holy man, greatly indignant, not because of the insult done to him, but at the impudence of the young

women, cursed them and the water. That this was done by divine inspiration will be seen by the event. The water disappeared suddenly, and dry land covered the place where it had been, while the immodest girls were most hideously changed. Their hair had turned gray and their faces had become full of wrinkles. Looking at each other, they shrieked with fear, and ashamed of themselves, they cried bitterly, and hastened into the city. Having informed the inhabitants of what had happened, the latter came in great crowds to the Saint, begging him to restore the water and to take his curse from the girls, promising to obey him in all things. The Saint had compassion on them, and having prayed, the water gushed out of the ground and occupied its former place. After this he had the young women brought to him. Not all dared to appear, but those who came he re-proved most severely for the scandal they had given, and then, making the sign of the Cross over them, he restored them to their natural form. The rest, who had remained away, had to carry to the end of their days their gray hairs and distorted features. This occurrence induced the inhabitants of the city to lend a willing ear to the teachings of St. James, and to embrace the Christian faith. Many other miracles, wrought by the Saint, not less than his edifying life, gained him so great a reputation that he was chosen and consecrated Bishop of Nisibis, and the Roman martyrology calls him a man of great holiness. At the Council of Nice, he gave excellent proofs of his learning, and opposed the heretic Arius with great vehemence and power. That the world was delivered from this heretic was, in a great measure, due to St. James; for he and the holy Bishop Alexander had agreed not to cease to implore God, by fasts and prayers, to free the Church from this evil-doer, until they were heard. The event they desired soon took place. When Arius, with some of his followers, was on his way to force himself into the church, he was compelled to go aside. As he was away long, his followers looked for him and found him dead. After this, St. James returned to his See, which he administered with renewed vigor.

Under the reign of the Emperor Constantine, Sapor, King of Persia, besieged Nisibis. He had an innumerable army, and attacked the city during seventy days. At last, by a stratagem, he demolished a large part of the walls enclosing Nisibis, and hoped on the next day to take the city. The holy bishop spent the whole of that night on his knees, praying to God to protect his people. The following morning, seeing that the enemy was still progressing, the bishop ascended the city walls, and on beholding the large army, he prayed to God to manifest His power for

the glory of His holy name. His prayer was answered. - God sent an immense swarm of gnats, which, creeping into the trunks of the elephants and the nostrils of the horses, tormented them by their bites, so that they sprang about as if mad, wounding and trampling to death many of the soldiers, and causing such disturbance and excitement in the camp, that the soldiers fled ; and thus the siege was raised. The citizens of Nisibis recognized that they were indebted to the prayers of the bishop for so miraculous a delivery from the enemy, and they manifested their gratitude by the high esteem in which they held him during the remainder of his holy life. He, however, exhorted them to give thanks to God alone, and to guard themselves lest their sins might bring other evils on the country. At last, full of merits, he ended his earthly pilgrimage by a happy death.

As long as the holy relics of St. James remained in Nisibis, the city was free from all inroads of enemies ; but after the Apostate Julian had removed them, the city had much to suffer from the Persians, and was at last surrendered to them in the reign of the Emperor Jovian.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Attila, the tyrant, who devastated France, called himself, "the scourge of God." God made use of this scourge to punish the iniquities of men. In our times, also, the Almighty uses different scourges to punish us. Such are, diseases, poverty, divers miseries, misfortunes and persecutions. With these God not only punishes sinners to move them to repentance, but also the pious, in order that they may gather more merits for eternity. Do you feel the lashes of such a scourge ? Turn to your God who directs the strokes, and submitting to Him, say with David : "I am ready for scourges !" (Psalm xxxvii.) It is a good sign if the Almighty scourges you in this world, as you may thus escape the lashes with which the Divine justice ceaselessly punishes the wicked in the other world. Pray that He may spare you these. Say in the words of St. Augustine : "Lord, in this world, burn and cut ; but have mercy on me in eternity."

II. St. Lupus administered his see fifty-two years, constantly laboring for the spiritual welfare of his flock ; after this time, he was called to receive his eternal reward. Attila, the tyrant, reigned, according to some authors, forty-four years, made his name renowned and feared in the world, by causing bloody wars and destruction ; and was then called by a sudden death into everlasting punishment. He was suffocated in his own blood on the night of his wedding-day. Consider attentively the word, "Eternal." The labors of St. Lupus ended, but the reward which they gained him from God has no end. He has enjoyed his recompense already more than a thousand years, much longer than his labor lasted, and will be in the possession of it longer than another thousand years, for it will never be taken from him. The reward is Eternal ! The reign of Attila, his wars, his cruelties, his spoils, his honors and enjoyments, all have ended, but his punish-

ment in hell is endless. It has lasted already longer than a thousand years, will still last longer than another thousand years; for, it will never end. The punishment is Eternal! With whom do you wish to be in eternity? Most assuredly not with the unhappy Attila, but with St. Lupus. If this is your desire, work unweariedly for your salvation. You may not have fifty-two years before you—perhaps not as many months. But if you had still more time, if you had a thousand years to labor, what difference would it make? The reward would still last immeasurably longer. "Consider and compare the work or misery, and the glory or recompense," says St. Peter Damian. "Compare the moment which flies, with Eternity; that which is trifling with that which is of importance. The work thou hast to perform, the trials thou hast to suffer, are momentary; but the glory awaiting thee in heaven is Eternal. Small and trifling is that which thou must suffer; great and important that which awaits thee."

From the life of St. James learn: First, that pious people and Saints thought bathing, as it is done in our time by the young, and often also by grown persons, immodest and punishable. What am I saying? Only the pious and Saints? Nay, even the heathens detested and punished it. They declared that those who indulged in it, had lost all modesty. How does a Christian reply to this, of whom St. Paul requires before all things, modesty or retirement, when he says: "Let your modesty be known to all men." (Philip. iv.) Does any one dare to say that, being exposed as those generally are who bathe is not sinful? Will any one pretend to say, that it is not sinful when we wantonly place ourselves in danger

of death? The same danger threatens those who think they understand swimming perfectly; for it has become a proverb, "the best swimmers drown in the water." We hear yearly, that here and there people are drowned while bathing. What can we think of the death of such persons? Can we reasonably suppose that it is a happy one? Those may believe so who like, but I cannot be convinced of it. I should fear to be condemned for all eternity, if I should die such a death. Whoever desires to die happily, must avoid all such wantonness. Those who have the charge of young people are obliged to prevent them from it and to punish them accordingly, if they have indulged in such dangerous pastime. Modest eyes will not even look at such impudence, or rather, at such wickedness, but will endeavor to prevent it as an offence to God. Secondly, learn how powerful are the prayers of a Saint, and what benefit they may bring to a whole city. Thirdly, learn to praise the omnipotence of the Most High. By small, despicable insects, He put to flight a large army with weapons and shields. How easily can He cast you, weak, poor, miserable worm of the earth, to the ground—yes, even into hell? Dare you offend so mighty a God? Dare you refuse due obedience to Him, and disregard His commands? Have you not just reason to fear Him? "What is more to be feared," asks St. Bernard, "than a power which you cannot withstand, a wisdom from which nothing is concealed? If the Lord did not possess one of these, you would have less reason to fear Him. But since He has an eye that sees all, a hand able to do all things, you may well fear Him."

THIRTY-FIRST DAY OF JULY.

ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA, FOUNDER OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS.

St. Ignatius, the glorious founder of the Society of Jesus, and the unweary laborer for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls, was born of noble parents in Biscay, a province of Spain, in the castle of Loyola, from which he took his name. His birth took place in 1491, in the same century in which Martin Luther, the well-known heretic, was born, who with Calvin, born in 1506, persecuted the Catholic Church and endeavored to destroy it entirely. God, according to a papal declaration, always watching over His holy Church, would oppose Ignatius to these two new heretics, that through him, and through the Society founded by him, their erroneous doctrines might be thoroughly refuted, and the Catholic faith have powerful protectors, as, in former days, He had opposed Arius by St. Athanasius, Nestorius by St. Cyril, Pelagius by St. Augustine, and other heretics by other apostolic men.

Ignatius, chosen by God for so important a work, was endowed with great natural gifts, possessed a comprehensive mind, and early exhibited wonderful abilities and tact, with unusual wisdom and strength of soul. All his aspirations were lofty, and nothing vulgar or low could attract him. Soon perceiving his talents, his parents sent him, after he had been carefully instructed in the Catholic faith, to the Court of King Ferdinand of Castile, where he was educated with the pages, and was taught all that was supposed befitting his rank. In riper years, he entered the army, hoping to become famous by his valor. In 1521, an opportunity was offered to give a proof of his courage. The king had entrusted to him the defence of the city of Pampeluna, which was besieged by the French. Ignatius acted with all the prudence and caution of an old and experienced warrior. But Providence so ordered, that the wall upon which Ignatius stood, bravely defending the fortress, was struck by a cannon-ball, and a fragment of stone severely injured one of his limbs, while at the same time the ball rebounding, bruised his foot so badly, that he sank unconscious to the ground. The French were soon in possession of the fortress, but they treated their heroic prisoner with the greatest kindness, and sent him, a few days later, on a litter, to the Castle of Loyola. Here Ignatius became so ill, that it was deemed necessary to give him the last

sacraments. The thread on which his life hung was so slender that the physicians all agreed that there was no hope for him, if before midnight the symptoms should not change. The Most High did not wish to call Ignatius out of life, and had brought him to this state only to make him disgusted with the world, and so lead him to a holier warfare. Therefore, on the eve of the feast of the Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul, God sent the Prince of the Apostles, to whom Ignatius had been greatly devoted from his early youth, to restore him to health. Appearing to Ignatius during his sleep, St. Peter looked tenderly at him, and touching his wounds, took from him all pain, and thus saved him from the danger of death. But nevertheless, it was the will of God that Ignatius should keep his bed a considerable time, in order to regain his strength. To pass the time, he asked for something to read; but, by special providence, none of the romances he desired were to be found, and in their stead, two devout books were brought to him, one containing the "Life of Christ," and the other the "Lives of the Saints." Ignatius, little inclined to read them, took them for want of others, and at first only looking into them, soon became, by the grace of God, so deeply interested in them that, meditating on the acts of Christ and the Saints, he repented of his past idle life, and resolved, thenceforth, to follow their steps, and to serve God alone. Rising during the night, he cast himself before an image of the Blessed Virgin, begging of her the grace to be accepted into her service and that of her beloved Son, and to remain in it until the end of his days. Hardly was his prayer finished, when suddenly a terrible noise was heard, the house was shaken as by an earthquake, and the windows were shattered. St. Ignatius regarded this as a sign that his prayer was heard, and exhibited more joy than fear. The Evil One, hereupon, endeavored, by a thousand representations and apprehensions, to make him abandon his determination, and pressed him with the most dangerous temptations. But Ignatius again sought refuge with the divine Mother, and addressed her in the words of the Holy Church: "Show thyself a Mother." The Divine Mother appeared to him with her heavenly Child, and animating him to persevere, she assured him of her assistance. After this comforting vision, all his temptations ended, and all his thoughts were directed towards the regulation of his new life. As soon as he was sufficiently recovered, he, under some pretext, left the house of his father and repaired to Montserrat, where a miraculous image of the Blessed Virgin drew crowds of pilgrims. There he made his general confession amid a flood of tears, and received, with the

greatest devotion, the Blessed Sacrament. After this, he gave his horse to the monastery, and hung his sword near the altar of the Blessed Virgin, as a sign that henceforth he would no longer serve the world but God only. Having bestowed his costly garments on a beggar, he clothed himself as a poor pilgrim, and remained, as a newly-enrolled soldier of the highest of all generals, all night long before the altar of the Mother of Mercy, in fervent prayer. The next day, which was the feast of the Annunciation of our Lady, he left early and betook himself to Manresa, which is three miles from Montserrat, and going to the hospital which was there, he served the sick with the most tender devotion. As soon, however, as he detected that they began to esteem him for his charity and other pious deeds, he secretly left and went into a mountain cave, five or six hundred yards off, in which he led an extremely austere and penitential life. He daily spent seven hours on his knees, praying and weeping on account of his sins. He fasted continually except on Sundays, when he partook of the food of angels. Water and the bread which he received as alms, was his only nourishment. He always wore a hair-shirt, which was fastened round his loins by small chains. He scourged himself three times daily, often unto blood. The bare ground was his bed, and he never took more than a few hours' rest, passing the remainder of the night in meditation on death and the Passion of Christ. By long continuation of this austere life, his body became so emaciated and weak, that he was found more than once, lying more dead than alive on the road to Manresa, whither he used to go to assist at Holy Mass. Some friends advised him not to be so severe with himself; but he said: "Oh! let me suffer this trifle in order to secure my salvation." Satan also tried to dissuade him from his austerities, and as he could not succeed, he took, by the permission of the Almighty, the form of a virtuous man, and going to the holy penitent, said, that it was not possible to continue long such extreme mortifications, and that he should therefore moderate them somewhat. "Unhappy man," said he, "you may still live seventy years; and have you the courage to spend so long a time in such penance and severity?" Ignatius replied: "Can you promise me one single day of the many years of which you speak?" With these words, he brought the spirit of lies to shame, and drove him away. God permitted also this holy penitent to be tormented with the most harassing scruples. To overcome these, he resolved to abstain from all food and drink until he was free from them, as he had read that a certain Saint had used this remedy in a similar case. Seven days he passed without partaking of any nourishment; but his confessor, on

hearing of it, commanded him to take his usual sustenance. Ignatius obeyed, and was from that moment not only released from his scruples, but obtained also from God an especial gift to free others from them. Many other special graces did the Almighty bestow upon Ignatius in the first year of his conversion, which space does not permit us to relate. But there is one thing which we can not omit to mention: it is that, during the year of penance at Manresa, Ignatius wrote that wonderful book of "Spiritual Exercises," which has been recommended by the most learned and the most holy men, as the path, pointed out by heaven itself, to conversion, to spiritual perfection and holiness. The Apostolic See has praised and confirmed it, and the spiritual benefits which have been derived from it, and are still to this hour derived from it, are inexpressibly great. But as it is known that Ignatius, when he wrote this book, was as yet without learning, it must be concluded that he was inspired by God to give those instructions, by virtue of which he, and, later, the sons of his Order, worked real miracles of conversion in so many different places and persons. During this penitential year, the heart of Ignatius was filled with an intense desire to visit the Holy Land, not only for the purpose of seeing those places which have been hallowed by the presence of our Saviour, but also in the hope of converting the Mahommedans, and of giving his life for the true faith, in that land where our beloved Redeemer gave His for our welfare. This voyage was undertaken in the greatest poverty and with deep devotion, and the holy places visited with a true spirit of ardent piety and reverence. As, however, the ecclesiastics, who resided there, dissuaded him from remaining long, and Ignatius himself recognized that, to gain his aim in life, which was to further the salvation of souls, he needed learning, he returned to Europe, and began at Barcelona, when 33 years of age, to study the rudiments of the Latin grammar with the boys in the public school. He continued his studies at different places and finished them at Paris, where he received the title of Doctor of Divinity. The trials, dangers, persecutions, disgraces, wrongs and calumnies he suffered, as well in his travels as during the years of his studies, would be too long to relate here. On his return from the Holy Land, he was seized by the Spaniards, who were at war with France, and was at first taken for a spy, and afterwards for a fool, and thus most disgracefully treated. By a few words, he could have escaped these insults; but he was silent and bore it all patiently, for the love of Christ, who just then had appeared to him. At several places where he studied, or through which he travelled, he was apprehended by order of the

authorities, and cast into prison; as at Alcala, Salamanca and Venice. The only cause of this cruel treatment was that, wherever the holy man was, he showed solicitude for the salvation of others, and converted many by his pious discourses, explanation of the Christian doctrine and his own Spiritual Exercises. Many he persuaded to leave the world, others he led to a quiet Christian life. For this he was suspected of disseminating false doctrines and corrupting men under the appearance of piety. But as often as he was examined, he was found guiltless, and requested to continue in his zeal. At Paris, where he had recalled many young men from an idle and sinful life to a better and more useful one, it was resolved to whip him in public, as a corrupter of youth. When, however, the director of the school had recognized his innocence, he publicly and on his knees asked pardon of the Saint, and praised, in the highest terms, his zeal in leading souls in the path of salvation. To speak of God and of heavenly things had become a second nature to him, so that those who knew not his name, called him the man of spiritual conversation, or the man who was constantly looking up to heaven. He reformed a convent near Barcelona, the inmates of which stood in very ill repute. This drew upon him the vengeance of certain persons, who had been, at his suggestion, excluded from the house, and who, one day, lay in wait for him and beat him most unmercifully, threatening to treat him still worse, if he did not cease preaching at the convent. Ignatius was not in the least deterred by this from his good work. His enemies then hired two ruffians to kill him. These set upon him and treated him in a most brutal manner, whilst the Saint, with eyes raised to heaven, prayed God to forgive them. They left him weltering in his blood, supposing they had killed him. He, however, recovered, and no sooner were his wounds healed, than he again went to the convent in order to strengthen the nuns to perseverance in virtue. When some one tried to dissuade him from going, on account of the danger, he said: "What can be more pleasing to me than to die for love of Christ and my neighbors?" Not satisfied with his personal labors for the salvation of souls, he resolved to seek such men as would join him with all the power of their minds, to labor for the same object. He succeeded in uniting to himself nine students of the University of Paris, all of whom possessed great knowledge and were eminent for their talents. Among them was Francis Xavier, afterwards so celebrated as the Apostle of the Indies. Ignatius, by his Spiritual Exercises, led them all to virtue and sanctity, and inspired them with the fervent desire to devote themselves to the salvation of souls and to the honor of God.

In 1534, on the feast of the Assumption of our Lady, Ignatius and his companions went to a Chapel, dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, on Montmartre, near Paris, and after they had received holy communion, they all made a vow to renounce the world and go to Jerusalem to convert the heathen. If, however, they were unable, after waiting one year, to make their way to Palestine, they vowed that they would go to Rome, throw themselves at the feet of the Holy Father, and offer their services in whatever he might deem most beneficial for the salvation of souls. On account of a war between the Turks and the Venetians, they were unable to make their pilgrimage to Palestine; and hence, in fulfilment of their vow, they went to Rome. When Ignatius and the two companions who were with him had reached a place called La Storta, near Rome, the Saint went into a chapel near by to say his prayers. His fervor was such that, in an ecstasy, he saw the Heavenly Father and beside Him His Son bearing the Cross. He heard the Heavenly Father commend him with loving words to His Son, putting him and his companions under His protection. The Divine Son manifested His pleasure at this Divine command, and turning to Ignatius, said: "I will favor you at Rome." With this the vision ended, but the inner comfort which Ignatius and his companions, to whom he related it, derived from it, departed not, but remained in their hearts.

As soon as Ignatius had arrived in Rome, he threw himself at the feet of the Holy Father and offered the services of himself and his companions, for such spiritual labor as he might wish them to do in any part of the world. The Pope received them with pleasure, and having had sufficient proofs of their virtue and learning, he sent some of them to those places where he thought they would do the most good. Ignatius remained with the rest at Rome, and at first instructed young and old in the Christian doctrine; but later, he began to preach for the reformation of morals and exhorted the people to a more frequent use of the holy Sacraments. It cannot be denied that the custom of instructing children in the Christian doctrine, and also the frequent reception of the holy Eucharist, which was at that period greatly neglected, were again revived, or at least increased by St. Ignatius and his companions. To preserve this improvement and these advantages for future times, and to increase them still more, St. Ignatius resolved to found a new Order, whose members should labor for the spiritual well-being of men. He disclosed his intentions to the Pope, and having written, by his permission, certain rules, presented them to his Holiness for approval. After many difficulties, the holy desires of Ignatius were at length fulfilled, and thus was founded a new Order.

under the name of the Society of Jesus, which in the year 1540 was first sanctioned by Paul III., afterwards by several other Popes, and was also confirmed by the Council of Trent. This Order demands of its members, besides the usual three vows of perpetual poverty, chastity and obedience, a vow to instruct youth, and requires of the Professed another vow, of special obedience to the Pope, by which they are bound to go, even without money, whithersoever the Pope may send them to labor for the salvation of souls. Ignatius was chosen as General by the members of the new Order, but he did not accept the office until he was commanded to do so by his confessor after having long consulted with God in prayer. He administered his office with admirable wisdom and strength of character, and to the immeasurable benefit of the entire Christian world, until his death. Although remaining at Rome, he sent his disciples into other cities and lands, after having instructed them carefully in all that pertained to the salvation of souls and to the manner of leading them to God. Above all, he recommended entire self-abnegation, after the example of Christ, who has said: "Whoever will follow me, must deny himself." Hence he often said these important words: "Conquer thyself." St. Francis Xavier, who frequently made use of this expression, was asked why he did so? He answered: "Because I learned it from our Father Ignatius." Ignatius further endeavored to lead his disciples to acquire true virtue, especially a fervent love of God and of their neighbors. In this, as in all other virtues, he was a shining example to them all. According to the testimony of the Apostolic See, he had acquired the most perfect control over his inclinations. He also taught the members of the Order to be solicitous for the cleanliness and beauty of the house of God, for the conversion of heretics and heathens, for the promotion of virtue among Catholics, for the instruction of the ignorant, especially of children in the mysteries of the faith; for the frequent use of the Sacraments; for the increase of the veneration of the Blessed Virgin; and, in a word, for everything that could advance the honor of God and the salvation of souls. The members of the Order faithfully obeyed his directions. The fame of the great good that these holy men did, induced many kings and princes to invite them into their states. Among these, the first was John III., King of Portugal, who, through his Ambassadors at Rome, demanded seven of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus. At this request, Ignatius sighed deeply and said: "If the king requires seven of my brethren, how many will remain for other countries?" These words show how zealous he was in his thoughts and wishes. As the number of his

religious was small, at that time, and as he would, moreover, send none who were not well-grounded in learning and virtue, instead of seven, he sent but two; but those two did more than could have been expected of seven.

They were Simon Rodriguez and Francis Xavier, the latter of whom, on account of his having converted many thousands of heathens and performed many miracles, is known and honored all over the Christian world. The good which was done by the holy efforts of these two men, induced the king to found the first college for the Society of Jesus, at Goa, the capital of India, and soon after, another at Coimbra in Portugal, which, in the course of time, supplied many places with apostolic laborers. While thus the disciples of St. Ignatius untiringly labored to win souls for Heaven in Portugal, India, and other countries, the holy father employed equally well those who were with him in Rome. All that he had taught his companions about decorating the house of God, converting the heretics, and instructing the Catholics, as before related, he practised at Rome, without abating his zeal. "The world seemed too small for him," said Gregory XV. No labor, no danger, could deter him, where the salvation of even a single soul was concerned. "If I could die a thousand deaths in one day," said he on one occasion, "I would willingly do so to save a single soul." At another time he was heard to say, that if he had the choice either to die immediately with the assurance of his salvation, or without this assurance to live and to have an opportunity to gain a soul for Heaven, he would rather remain upon earth and save that soul than die immediately and go to Heaven. These words display the love of St. Ignatius towards his neighbor and his zeal for the spiritual welfare of men. No less was this manifested in his works; and it can be truly said that there was no man, whatever his race or station, for whose welfare he did not labor either personally or through the members of his order. With the greatest love and solicitude, he instructed children in the Christian doctrine, even when he was general of the order, and bound all its members to do the same. He founded public schools in various places, where youth was instructed in virtue and learning without any compensation. People of all ages and conditions were animated by his pious discourses, and especially by his Spiritual Exercises, to fervor in the service of God, and were led not only to repentance for their sins, but to the practice of the highest virtue. For the welfare of orphans and of children who had been abandoned by their parents, he established in Rome two houses where they were taken care of and instructed until they were able to take care of themselves. For single women, who on account of their

poverty were in danger of sin, he founded the Asylum of St. Catharine, where they had a home until they either entered a convent or were provided with a dower. Another house was founded for women who were willing to abandon their wicked life and do penance. In it they were maintained and instructed. God only knows how many sins the holy man prevented by the foundation of these houses, and how much good he thus occasioned. It is true that some who had been reclaimed, returned to their old course of life, and the Saint was told that he should not waste his efforts upon them. But he answered : " It does not seem to me that my care and labor have been lost, even if such persons return to their former vices. It is much if I prevent them from offending God only for a single night." His solicitude extended even to the hardened Jews ; their conversion was an object of great concern to him, and God blessed his efforts in their behalf with such signal success that he baptized forty of them in one year. He also established a house where those who had renounced Judaism were received and kept until they were thoroughly instructed in the Christian religion and baptized. The solicitude which the Saint manifested toward Germany, which was at that time in great danger of entirely forsaking the true faith, must not be forgotten. For the salvation of that country, he not only offered many prayers, penances and masses, but also ordered that all the priests of the Society should offer the holy sacrifice once every month, and all those who were not priests, should say certain prayers for the same intention. This ordinance is still kept. Besides this, he instituted, amidst infinite difficulties, the German College, which is still in existence in Rome, and in which young Germans are educated for the priesthood and prepared for the missions, in order that when their education is completed and they return to their homes, they may be able to protect the Catholic religion, convert the heretics, and by their good example, induce all to live virtuously. Martin Chemnitz, a well known Lutheran, wrote in regard to this College, that if the Society of Jesus had done but this, it could be called the destroyer of the reformed religion. St. Ignatius further manifested his sympathy with oppressed Germany, by sending several apostolic men to Cologne, Mayence, and other cities, who bravely opposed the heretics, and animated the Catholics to fidelity to their church. Melancthon, the assistant of Luther, said himself, that by the power of these men, the dissemination of the new Gospel was greatly hindered. When he perceived that the number of the Society daily increased, he cried out with grief : " Oh ! wo, wo ! How will it be with the new gospel ? The whole world will be filled with Jesuits ! " The Evil One, the founder and protector of all here-

sies, seemed to think the same ; for he used his utmost endeavors to interfere with St. Ignatius in his most holy efforts. He instigated some to accuse, not only the Saint, but the whole Society, of the most hideous vices, and to persecute them whenever there was the slightest opportunity. There is not to be found an Order which, during its whole existence, has had to suffer such bitter persecution, and has been so slandered, so unjustly dealt with by the heretics, and even by some who called themselves Catholics, as the Order founded by St. Ignatius. But never was the Saint seen depressed about his personal persecutions ; and the attacks which were directed against the whole Order he bore with great cheerfulness, as he concluded that as Satan was the author of them, he must have suffered some severe loss through the labors of the Society. On the contrary, when one day he was told that in a certain country, the members of his Order had nothing to suffer, he became very thoughtful, and said that he feared they were negligent in doing their duty, since they were not persecuted. He also prophesied that the Society of Jesus would always have the glory of being persecuted by the enemies of Christ and of the holy church. He frequently recalled the words of Christ : " If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you." The greater and more frequent the persecutions were, the more the Society increased, and the more extended was its usefulness among the faithful, the heretics and the heathens, to the indescribable consolation of its founder. Pope Marcellus II. said that, since the days of the Apostles, he had never read of any one whose labors God had blessed with such abundant fruit during his life time, as those of St. Ignatius. The holy founder lived long enough to see his Order spread in all parts of the world, divided into twelve provinces, with more than one hundred colleges and houses. He heard how, by the unwearying labors of the Fathers, whole nations were converted from their idolatry to the true faith, numberless heretics brought back to the Church, and everywhere Catholics were strengthened in that faith, without which there is no salvation. He himself heard and saw how youth was carefully instructed in the Catholic religion, in the fear of God, and in all branches of knowledge ; and how the people in general were animated to greater piety, to the more frequent use of the Holy Sacraments and all Christian virtues. He heard of the many miracles wrought by St. Francis Xavier, and other Apostolic men, in testimony to the true faith. He had the happiness of hearing that some members of his Order had heroically given their blood for the faith of Christ ; and from every land he received news of the good which his children were incessantly doing for the honor

of God and the salvation of souls. All this filled the heart of the holy man with inexpressible joy, as he desired nothing more fervently than that the Almighty might be known and honored by all men. He was frequently heard to exclaim: "Oh God! that all men might know and love Thee." Meanwhile his own soul burned with the desire to see, face to face, the God whom he loved as his highest good. This desire grew to such an extent that the mere thought of death, or a glance at heaven, drew tears from his eyes, and made him disgusted with the whole world. Often, while looking up at the sky, he would cry out: "Oh! how I despise the world, when I look up to Heaven." He begged God to free his soul from the fetters of mortality. God heard his prayer. A fever seized him, and although the physicians pronounced it not dangerous, Ignatius knew that it was a messenger to call him away. He asked for the last Sacraments and devoutly received them. When evening came, he called one of the oldest Fathers of the Order, and sent him to ask for the Holy Father's last blessing and a plenary indulgence. He passed the night in an almost continual ecstasy, until an hour after sunrise, when, with eyes raised to heaven, and with the sacred names of Jesus and Mary on his lips, he ended his life, on July 31st, 1556, in the 64th year of his age. At the same hour when this took place, the Saint, arrayed in bright, shining light, appeared to a pious widow, named Margaret Gigli, at Bologna, and announced to her his death. The unexpected death of the great founder filled Rome with mourning, and everywhere was heard the lamentation: "The holy man is dead." Many did not hesitate to honor him as a Saint immediately, and ask his intercession with the Almighty. The resting-place of his holy relics was twice changed. At the first interment, an eminent servant of the Almighty heard heavenly music during two days; at the second, many saw bright stars upon his shrine.

Holy men and women, who lived at the time of St. Ignatius, admired and praised the Saint and the Society he founded. St. Philip Neri, who lived at Rome, said that he had seen the countenance of Ignatius, several times, resplendent with a heavenly light. In all doubts and fears, he resorted to St. Ignatius for counsel and comfort. To two members of the Society, whom he met one day, he said: "You are sons of a great father, to whom I owe much; he taught me the science of prayer." After the Saint's death, Philip sent to the tomb to commend to him his cares, and according to his own words, received marvellous comfort and assistance. St. Francis Xavier esteemed the Saint so highly while he still lived, that he called

him the beloved father of his soul, and a Saint. He cut the name of St. Ignatius from a letter which he had received from him, placed it in a reliquary and carried it about him, and wrought many miracles with it. He always wrote to him on his knees, as a sign of great reverence for him, and read the letters he received from him in the same manner. I must omit the praise bestowed on St. Ignatius by other Saints, as, St. Francis of Sales, St. Charles Borromeo, St. Cajetan, St. Andrew Avellino, St. Thomas of Villanova, St. Teresa, St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, and many others. The pious Louis of Granada, a Dominican, who lived at the time that St. Ignatius and his order were bitterly persecuted, showed himself a warm friend and powerful protector and admirer of both until his death. Neither shall I mention here what many Popes, bishops and other high dignitaries of the Church have said in praise of the Society of Jesus, nor repeat the high commendations given by crowned heads and great statesmen, although it might add greatly to the glory of the holy founder.

We will only consider somewhat more attentively the words of the Roman Calendar of the Saints. It states that the Saint was remarkable for holiness and miracles. Much is contained in these few words. Ignatius was remarkable for his holiness. The heroic virtues, which so brilliantly shone in him, are a proof of this ; his firm and intense faith, his unwavering trust in God ; his fervent love of the Saviour and of his neighbor ; his tender affection for the passion and death of Christ ; his filial devotion to the Virgin Mother ; his constant self-abnegation ; his perfect resignation to the Divine Will ; his invincible patience, admirable meekness, deep humility, and insatiable zeal to labor for the honor of the Most High, and to save souls for Heaven. Especial instances of all these virtues are to be found in the book which treats of the devotion of the Ten Wednesdays in honor of St. Ignatius.

Ignatius was also remarkable for his miracles. God worked many wonders through him during his life-time. One of his disciples who was dangerously sick, was healed by embracing him ; another was cured of epilepsy. He relieved a noble matron from the Evil Spirit of whom she had been possessed four years, and healed several others of different maladies. He even restored life to a young man in Barcelona who had hung himself in despair and who was pronounced dead by all who saw him. God wrought still more miracles at the intercession of his faithful servant, after his death. In the process of his canonization we find two hundred miracles, which were tested by the ecclesiastical authorities and were found to rest on the authority of incontestable witnesses

under oath. After the canonization their number was still increased. During his life also many other gifts and graces were granted him by God, such as the gift of tears; the gift of reading the hearts of others; the spirit of prayer which he possessed in so eminent a degree, that he often fell into ecstasies which lasted several days, and finally the gift of prophecy and revelations. It is known that he said to a youth at Barcelona, who desired to follow him and live in poverty: "You will remain in the world and become a lawyer, and the father of several children, one of whom will, in your place, enter the Order which God will found through me, His unworthy servant." At Antwerp he said to a merchant: "There will come a time when you will found a College in your country for the members of the Order which God will establish through me, His unworthy servant." All this took place exactly as he had foretold. The number of the revelations and visions with which he was blessed is very large. Besides the visit of St. Peter, the Blessed Virgin and our Lord, mentioned in the above pages, it is known that Christ appeared several times to him, at Manresa, during his year of penance; and also later during his holy life. The Blessed Virgin also appeared to him in like manner, especially at the time when he wrote his book of the Spiritual Exercises. The Roman Breviary asserts that he was so enlightened by the grace of God, that he used to say, that if there were no gospel, he would be ready to die for his faith on the evidences which the Almighty had revealed him at Manresa. In one of his ecstasies, so much was revealed to him of the incomprehensible mystery of the Holy Trinity, that he wrote a book which excited the most profound astonishment of all learned men. At another time, the happy death of two of his companions was revealed to him. The first was made known to him whilst he was at Monte Cassino, where, during his prayers, he saw the soul of Father Hozes, surrounded by a heavenly splendor, carried by angels into Heaven. The second was when on his way to say mass for his sick disciple at St. Peter's Church, in Rome, suddenly stopping in his walk, he looked fixedly up to Heaven, then turning to go home, he said: "Let us go home, for our Father Coduri has departed." From this it was concluded that he had seen the soul of the dead ascending to heaven. To the visions which St. Ignatius had of others, I will add one that another had of him. At Cologne, on the Rhine, lived Leonard Kessel, a priest of the Society of Jesus, who had an intense desire to see St. Ignatius, who at that time resided at Rome. He begged permission to go, for this purpose, to Rome, which, however, was not granted him. While one day praying in his room, his holy Father Ignatius suddenly stood before him, and after

having for some time kindly discoursed with him, as suddenly disappeared. All this proves that Ignatius was indeed remarkable for holiness, miracles and other divine gifts. In conclusion, I will explain why St. Ignatius is always represented in priestly robes, with the most holy name of Jesus on his breast and a book in his hand. His priestly robes denote that he was, in his time, an ornament to the priesthood, and eminently sanctified this dignity. It is further a sign of the great devotion with which the Saint said mass. He offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, for the first time on Christmas-night, at Rome, before the manger of Our Lord, after eighteen months of preparation. It was on that occasion and frequently afterwards, that during Holy Mass, bright rays of light surrounded him, that he was raised from the ground, and his face suffused with tears of devotion. The more to satisfy his ardor, he generally said Mass in the chapel of the house, passing a whole hour in the act, during which he frequently fell into ecstasy, and had the grace of seeing Christ visible in the Host. The rapture was so intense, that it was feared his veins would burst, and he had often to be carried to his room in a state of exhaustion. He passed two hours in prayer before and after mass, whenever the duties of his office permitted.

The name of Jesus on his breast, is an evidence of the great love he bore for the Saviour. This and no other name would he give to his order, that its members might never forget how Christ labored and suffered, and be thus encouraged to shrink from no labor for the Most High, to fear no danger, no persecution nor even death in the pursuance of that which had become their sacred duty. The Saint used to say that nothing could more effectually give us courage to endure, than the remembrance of this holy name. By the book which he holds in his hand, are designated the Rules which he wrote for his society, and which have been pronounced, by those able to judge, a most perfect piece of human wisdom. While he was writing this book, the Blessed Virgin appeared to him several times, and almost dictated what he wrote. The Council of Trent called it a pious Institution, approved by the Apostolic See, in which there was nothing to be altered. Pope Julius III. said, in a Bull, that there was nothing in the Institute of the Society of Jesus, that was not pious and holy. Pope Paul III. who was the first to approve and confirm the Society, when he was informed of the praiseworthy deeds which its members, in accordance with its rules, had performed, exclaimed: "The finger of God is here!" The words: "To the greater glory of God," which are read in the book, are those which St. Ignatius was wont to use, and they express the whole aim of his Rules which is no other than the advancement of the honor of God and the salvation of souls.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

You will find much in the life of St. Ignatius which may serve you for instruction and example ; and I will, in a few words, aid you to find some of the principal points.

I. The reform and holiness of the Saint began by reading a devout book, the *Lives of the Saints*. As I told you elsewhere, the reading of pious books, especially the *Lives of the Saints*, is of very great spiritual benefit ; while the reading of a wicked work does intense harm. The vices and consequent damnation of many are the effects of reading dangerous books ; while the holiness and final salvation of others, had their beginning in the lessons received while reading pious books. Judge from this in which direction your duty lies.

II. The purpose of all the actions of St. Ignatius was to promote the glory of God and the salvation of souls, and as he sought in everything only the glory of God, he always selected what was agreeable, nay most agreeable to Him. To do that which is always most pleasing to the Almighty, has always been the aim and distinguishing feature of all great saints on earth. To do only what is pleasing to God and to avoid that which is displeasing to Him, is the duty of every Christian. To avoid only mortal sin, is the sign of a very indifferent man, who neither loves God, nor is concerned about his salvation. Among which of these will you be ranked ? Endeavor to have a place among the first, and do nothing except what you are convinced is pleasing to the Almighty, and avoid all that you know is displeasing to His Majesty. Perform all your works for the honor of God and the salvation of your soul.

III. St. Ignatius was called the man who always spoke of God and

looked constantly to Heaven. Of that of which the heart is full, the mouth will always speak, while the eyes will ever glance towards it. Where do you turn your eyes, your thoughts, and what is inferred from your words ? What is the object of your love, your desires ? Examine yourself and correct where correction is needed. Finally, often pronounce these words of St. Ignatius : "Conquer thyself." He himself tried, from the moment of his conversion till his end, to conquer himself internally and externally. In this way he became holy. He impressed upon every one whom he tried to lead to a devout life, the maxim "Conquer thyself." He considered this not only useful, but necessary to salvation. And so it is. The world is full of care and misery, because Adam could not overcome himself and refrain from partaking of the forbidden fruit. Hell is full of souls who, because they could not control themselves, went to endless destruction ; while heaven is filled with those who practiced self-abnegation, and thus worked out their salvation. If you will escape Hell and gain Heaven, conquer yourself ; first, wherever this is demanded by a law of God or the Church ; and secondly, in things which depend on your own will. You have daily opportunities for this. Overcome yourself in speaking, hearing and seeing ; in eating and drinking ; in amusements ; in dressing ; in working ; in praying ; in visiting the churches ; in confession ; in avoiding occasions and persons dangerous to your spiritual welfare. Conquer yourself when your anger is aroused ; when you are wronged ; when Satan tempts you to sin ; when men tempt you. In one word, conquer yourself in all things. How can you do this ? Ask your confessor and he will tell

you. This is the road in which the saints walked and in which you too must walk if you would enter Heaven. Therefore, let this maxim of St. Ignatius be your constant companion: "Conquer thyself." There is no other way to become holy than to be dead to oneself. Hence, St. Ignatius says further:

"Take courage and strive manfully. One heroic act of self-abnegation is more pleasing to the Almighty than many other good works."

NOTICE.—To-day is the last of the month. Remember what I have elsewhere recommended to your consideration.

FIRST DAY OF AUGUST.

FEAST OF ST. PETER'S CHAINS.

The Holy Church, to-day, celebrates a special feast in commemoration of the great benefit which God bestowed upon his people by miraculously delivering St. Peter, the visible head of the church, from prison. The entire event is described in the Acts of the Apostles, by St. Luke. Herod Agrippa, a son of Aristobulus, favored by the Roman Emperor Claudius, ruled over Judæa, with the title of king. To give more stability to his reign, he endeavored to make himself beloved by the Jews, for which there was no easier way than to persecute the Christians, especially those who fearlessly proclaimed the Gospel of Christ, as did the holy Apostles. He had, therefore, apprehended, and soon after beheaded, James the Great, brother of St. John, which bloody deed gave the Jews great satisfaction. To increase this, Herod commanded them to seize St. Peter, intending to make away with him in the same manner. His command was executed; Peter was taken prisoner, chained and locked in a narrow dungeon, which was guarded so vigilantly, that he could not escape. It was then near the Easter Festival, after which St. Peter was to be beheaded. The Christians, in deep distress, were praying day and night, that the Almighty would not permit His flock to be so soon deprived of its shepherd. There was no human power to save him; but God, hearing the prayer of His people, delivered him by a miracle. On the eve of the day on which he was to be executed, God sent an Angel to set him free. Although heavily laden with chains, the holy Apostle slept peacefully, guarded by the soldiers. The Angel, who by his brightness, illumined the dungeon, struck him on the side and awakened him, saying: "Arise quickly. Gird thyself; put on thy sandals and cloak and follow me." The Apostle, whose

chains had fallen from his hands, and who thought it all a dream, obeyed and followed the Angel. They passed the first and second watches without attracting their attention, and reached the iron gate which led into the street. The gate opened without the aid of human hands. After having conducted St. Peter through one street, the Angel vanished and was seen no more. Not until then did the holy Apostle realize that his deliverance was not a dream but a reality. Hence he began to praise the Almighty, exclaiming: "Now I know truly that the Lord has sent his Angel and delivered me out of the hands of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of Judæa." He proceeded immediately to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where the faithful were assembled in prayer. When he knocked at the door, a servant, named Rhode, came, and asked who was there. Judging by the voice that it was Peter, she was so greatly startled with joy and astonishment, that, without opening the door, she ran back to announce the news. They all believed that she was insane, but as she reiterated her words, some said that it must be his guardian Angel. Meanwhile, the Saint repeated his knocking at the door. They opened it and perceived, with amazement, their beloved shepherd safe and free from chains. Their joy on beholding him was as great as had been their grief when he was taken prisoner. Having given the sign for silence, St. Peter related all that had happened to him. They all gave thanks to Divine Providence when he had ended, and learned to trust in future to the heavenly power and mercy.

Among the sermons of St. Chrysostom, there is one in which he asserts, that the chains by which St. Peter had been bound to the ground, came into the possession of the Christians soon after his deliverance, and were held by them in great honor. Eudoxia, wife of the emperor Theodosius the Younger, received them as a present from the patriarch Juvenal, when on a visit to the holy places, and sent one of them to the Church at Constantinople. The other she gave to her daughter Eudoxia, who married the Emperor Valentinian III. Eudoxia showed the chain to Pope Sixtus III., who, on his part, showed her the one with which St. Peter had been bound, before the Emperor Nero sentenced him to die. No sooner had the two chains been held together, than they suddenly united as if they had been but one chain and forged by the same hand. This miracle increased the veneration in which these chains were held, and actuated Eudoxia to build a special church at Rome for their keeping, where they can still be seen. Many sick were healed by their touch and many possessed were delivered ;

among the latter was a Count of the court of the Emperor Otho, who, in the year 969, was sent to Rome to be freed from the Evil Spirit. Pope John XIII. had hardly touched the count's neck with the holy chains, when he was relieved and his torments were ended.

St. Gregory the Great, writes that it was considered a great happiness to possess a few particles filed off from these chains, and that many persons devoutly wore them enclosed in golden crosses and lockets around their necks. Experience has shown that the touch of these crosses or lockets has restored health to many a sick person. A nobleman, who scoffed at this, and, in derision, dared to break one of these crosses, was severely chastised. He was instantly possessed by the Evil One and became so enraged that he took his own life, as St. Gregory relates. St. Augustine states that the iron of these precious chains is justly esteemed far above gold. Blessed are those fetters which touched the apostle and made him a martyr. "The touch of the blessed limbs of St. Peter has sanctified the instruments of torture." In another place the same Saint says: "If the shadow of St. Peter possessed a healing virtue, how much greater power must the chains of his sufferings have derived from him."



The Roman Martyrology records to-day also the names of three holy virgins and martyrs, whose names were Faith, Hope and Charity. Their mother was St. Sophia, a noble Roman matron, whose feast is kept on the 30th of September. All three were accused of being Christians, and by order of the Roman governor, were most cruelly tortured, and at last, beheaded. Faith, only twelve years old, was first barbarously scourged, after which she had her breasts cut off, and was cast into a vessel filled with melted tar. As she, however, continued to profess Christ fearlessly and remained unharmed, the tyrant ordered her to be beheaded. Hope, ten years old, looked at the torments which her sister endured, without being influenced by them to forsake her faith. The tyrant ordered her to be beaten with thongs over her whole body, after which she was thrown into a red hot furnace. As she too remained unharmed, they hung her upon a beam and tore her whole body with iron hooks; and when they saw that nothing could induce her to renounce Christ, they beheaded her. The same was done with the third sister, Charity, who had hardly reached nine years. They put her on a rack, scourged her most inhumanly, threw her into a

burning furnace, pierced and tore her tender body with unprecedented cruelty; but as she still adhered to her faith and was not injured by the fire, she ended her life, like her sisters, by the sword. God manifested to heathens and Christians, by these three feeble maidens, what those are able to endure who are strengthened from above, as all three showed great joy to suffer for Christ's sake, and displayed an invincible fortitude. They were greatly strengthened by their mother, who, like the mother of the Machabees, encouraged her children by describing the glory that awaited them in Heaven. She accompanied them to the place of execution; she cheered them to the last moment, entreating them to be faithful to their God. "Oh! happy mother that I am! I have been deemed worthy to honor the most Holy Trinity with my three daughters. O God! how inexpressibly great is the favor Thou hast shown me by taking my beloved children, adorned with the crown of martyrdom, into Thy kingdom." God ordained that the holy mother should quietly bury the bodies of her three daughters. Three days later, when she went to their graves to pray, her heart became filled with the most intense desire to be with them. "O you three priceless victims!" cried she, "who were sacrificed in honor of the Holy Trinity, take your mother up to you." She prayed thus till she sank in a swoon to the ground, and God accepting her petition, the holy mother breathed her last upon her children's grave. This happy death and the martyrdom of the three holy virgins took place in the year of our Lord 120.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Peter was innocent, yet persecuted, imprisoned, chained and sentenced to die, which shows that God allows His most faithful servants and best friends to be unjustly persecuted. St. Peter was not much disturbed at his imprisonment, but placing his trust in God, he peacefully slept in his chains. May this instruct you how to conduct yourself under trials. A good conscience and submission to the Divine Will were the means by which St. Peter's sleep, even in a dungeon, was not disturbed. Submit also, under all circumstances, to the Divine Will; endeavor to keep your conscience clear; and your mind will, at all times, be cheerful and

quiet. As no human assistance was left to St. Peter and he was to be executed the next day, God delivered him by a miracle. Such is frequently the way of the Almighty with us. He waits until danger has reached its height, and we must despair of human help; then He suddenly manifests His power and His mercy. Hence, never give way to despondency in grief or sorrow, but trust in God. "If it has reached its height, hope most; for it is then that God shows most clearly His might," says St. Chrysostom.

II. God preserved the three holy virgins uninjured in the fire; He did not however, turn the sword aside, but permitted them to be executed

by it. Thus He delivers His servants, sometimes from one trial and allows them to perish in another. In both He acts justly, though his reasons are unknown to us. Our duty consists in submitting ourselves to His decrees. God called the three holy virgins to Heaven through suffering and martyrdom ; their mother died a peaceful death. The former died young ; the latter in riper years. He still calls His creatures to Himself by different kinds of death, some early, some late. In this again it be comes our duty to be submissive to His decrees. He knows much better than we what time and what

kind of death is best for our salvation. St. Sophia desired to honor the Holy Trinity by joyful sacrifice of her three daughters, Faith, Hope and Charity. These names suggest the three virtues by the practice of which you are also enabled to honor the Holy Trinity in a most acceptable manner. Do not neglect it, especially in your morning and night prayers. "Ye that fear the Lord, believe in him ; hope in him ; love him, says the Holy Writ." (Ecc. ii.)

NOTICE.—To-day is the first of the month. Recall to your mind that which I have elsewhere counselled you.

THE SECOND DAY OF AUGUST.

THE SEVEN HOLY MACHABEES, MARTYRS.

THE CONSECRATION OF THE CHURCH OF PORTIUNCULA.

To-day is the feast of St. Stephen, pope and martyr. But as his life is so similar to the lives of many other Saints which we have related, we will give his place to the seven holy Machabees, although their feast was yesterday, as their history contains examples of the most heroic virtues.

After king Antiochus, surnamed Epiphanes, had conquered Jerusalem, he massacred many thousand Jews and endeavored to force others to abandon their religion. For instance, he had meats placed before them which their laws forbade, with the command that those who would not eat, should be executed. Many Jews obeyed, for fear of death ; but others would rather die than transgress the divine commandment. Among these were the seven sons of one mother, generally called "the seven Machabees." When they, and their mother were seized and taken before the king, and refused to obey his commands, they were most cruelly tormented with scourges. The eldest, addressing the tyrant, said : "What wouldst thou ask or learn of us? We are ready to die rather than transgress the laws of God received from our fathers." The tyrant, incensed at this boldness, commanded his executioners to lay him on a large

frying-pan made red hot, and let him burn slowly, after having in the presence of his mother and brothers, cut out his tongue, tore the skin from his head, and cut off his hands and feet. The other brothers, not disheartened by this terrible spectacle, exhorted each other to bear up manfully, saying: "The Lord will act justly and comfort us, as Moses says in his canticle: 'and he will comfort his servants.'" As soon as the first brother breathed his last, they seized the second and asked him if he would not eat the food set before him. "No," replied he, "I will not do it." Hardly had the words passed his lips, when they began to torture him. Turning towards the king, he said undauntedly; "Thou indeed, O most wicked king! destroyest us out of this present life; but the King of the world will raise us up, who die for His laws, in the resurrection of eternal life."

The tyrant, not heeding these words, ordered him to die like his brother. After this, the third was brought forward who seemed more eager to die than the king was to torture him. When the executioner commanded him to put out his tongue, he quickly did so, and, at the same time, stretching forth his hands, he said: "These I have from heaven, but for the laws of God, I now despise them; because I hope to receive them again from him;" Although the king and those present were astonished at the noble youth, who regarded the most terrible sufferings as nothing, he still continued to torture all the others. It was now the turn of the fourth, who, suffering the same martyrdom, showed the same fortitude. "It is better" said he "being put to death by men, to look for hope from God to be raised up again by Him"; and turning to the king, he added: "For, as to thee, thou shalt have no resurrection unto life." After his life had gloriously ended, the fifth was tortured like the others, but first addressing the king, he said: "Whereas thou hast power among men, though thou art corruptible, thou dost what thou wilt. But stay patiently a while and thou shalt see His great power, in what manner he will torment thee and thy seed." Not disturbed by these words, after the fifth was dead, the king ordered that the sixth should be killed in the same manner; but he, no less resolved than his brothers to die for the maintenance of the laws of God, in defiance of all danger, addressed the king, "Be not deceived without cause; for we suffer these things for ourselves, having sinned against our God; and things worthy of admiration are done to us: but do not think that thou shalt escape unpunished, for that thou hast attempted to fight against God." During the martyrdom of these six heroes, their mother was not only present, but exhorted them, with more than manly fortitude, not to forsake the laws of God, but rather

to suffer the most terrible torments, the most cruel death. She spoke to them especially of the resurrection at which God would restore to them the life which they now despised for the sake of His commandments. How deeply she impressed her six sons, by her encouragement, has already been related. There remained now but one. Antiochus, not wishing to be conquered by him also, spoke to him in the kindest manner, offering him his friendship, even promising, upon oath, to make him rich and happy, if he would forsake the law of his fathers. As he could not persuade the youth, he called the mother and requested her to beg her son to preserve his life. The mother promised to exhort him and kept her word, but not as the tyrant desired. "My son," said she, "have pity upon me, that bore thee nine months in my womb, and gave thee suck three years, and nourished thee and brought thee up to this age. I beseech thee, my son, look upon heaven and earth and all that is in them: consider that God made them out of nothing and mankind also: so thou shalt not fear this tormentor; but being made a worthy partner with thy brethren, receive death, that in that mercy I may receive thee again with thy brethren." The youth burning to suffer for the love of God, did not allow his mother to say more, but calling to the executioners, cried out: "For whom do you stay? I will not obey the commandment of the king, but the commandment of the law, which was given us by Moses." After this, turning to the king, he said: "But thou that hast been the author of all mischief against the Hebrews, shalt not escape the hand of God. For we suffer thus for our sins. And though the Lord, our God, is angry with us for a little while for our chastisement and correction, yet He will be reconciled again to His servants. But thou, O wicked and of all men most flagitious, be not lifted up with vain hopes without cause, whilst thou art raging against His servants. For thou hast not escaped the judgment of Almighty God, who beholdeth all things; for, my brethren, having undergone a short pain, are under the covenant of eternal life: but thou, by the judgment of God, shalt receive just punishment for thy pride. But I, like my brethren, offer up my life and my body for the laws of my fathers; calling upon God, to be speedily merciful to our nation, and that thou, by torments and stripes, mayst confess that He alone is God. But in me and in my brethren, the wrath of the Almighty, which has justly been brought upon our nation, shall cease." The king, greatly incensed, raged against him more cruelly than all the rest, and finally had him beheaded. Thus gloriously fought and died these seven incomparable heroes. The narrative of these events is taken from Holy Writ, which contains the words

of the heroes as here given. Of the subsequent history of their mother, whose grand and heroic spirit no one can sufficiently praise, Scripture makes no further clear mention. The Hebrew historian, Josephus, states that the king wreaked his vengeance upon her, by putting her to death with still more cruel torments, as he looked upon her as the cause of her sons' indomitable firmness, or as he termed it, obduracy. Many holy fathers, as St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, St. Chrysostom, St. Gregory, St. Cyprian and St. Leo, extol and praise these martyrs as glorious examples of faithful adherence to the laws of God, and recommend them to all Christians as worthy of imitation.



To-day is also the anniversary of the consecration of a small church in Italy, not far from Assisi. The church is called Portiuncula or Our Lady of the Angels, on account of its being built in honor of the Blessed Virgin, and also because heavenly harmonies were often heard to fill this sacred edifice. The great Founder, St. Francis, rebuilt it and frequently said his prayers there. In 1223, he went, guided by Divine inspiration or led by an angel, to this church, and there saw Christ, Our Lord, on a kingly throne, with the Blessed Mother at His right, and surrounded by innumerable angels. After the holy man had worshipped his Saviour, he was told to beg some grace. Love of men made him forgetful of himself, and he requested that a plenary indulgence should be granted to all who, having sincerely confessed and repented of their sins, should make a devout visit to the church of Portiuncula. Christ granted the noble wish and told the saint to go to the Pope as His Vicar on earth and ask him to confirm it. Pope Honorius, after a careful investigation, gave the desired confirmation, had the church solemnly consecrated and the plenary indulgence, conferred by Christ, publicly proclaimed. Many of the later Popes have bestowed this indulgence upon other churches of the Seraphic Order, so that all the faithful, making a good confession and communion, may, by paying a devout visit to a church of the Franciscans, gain the plenary indulgence on the appointed day, as well as those who go to the church of Portiuncula.

On account of the indulgence given by Christ to this Church of Portiuncula and by the Popes to other Churches, there have arisen, since the days of Calvin and Luther, many enemies of indulgences. Conspicuous among this class was Chemnitz, a Lutheran, who declared that the above was only a pious invention, a devout fable; that the common people were deceived by

being told that the indulgence of Portiuncula was the greatest ; that Christ himself had instituted it and that the guilt and punishment of sin were remitted by this and by no other indulgences. But those who speak thus, know not or will not know what the Catholic Church teaches about indulgences. We understand by an indulgence only the remission of the temporal punishment which still remains due after the forgiveness of our sins. A plenary indulgence is the remission of all this temporal punishment ; a partial indulgence is the remission of part of this temporal punishment. No Catholic believes that an indulgence remits a sin, but only the temporal punishment, which remains to be suffered after the sin is forgiven. The guilt of mortal sin and its eternal punishment, can, if we are baptized, be remitted and forgiven only by the holy Sacrament of Penance, or, if this should be impossible, by perfect contrition ; the guilt of a venial sin, however, is remitted by the sacrament, or, without it, by perfect or even imperfect contrition, which we call attrition. This remission of the guilt and of temporal and eternal punishment, is obtained by the merits of Our Saviour ; therefore, what Luther and Calvin shamelessly taught, and what their disciples are still teaching, that indulgences are an insult offered to the merits of Christ, or that we wrong Him by ascribing any value or effect to indulgences, is false. Neither do we teach that one plenary indulgence is greater than another in itself ; for as each is a remission of all temporal punishment, how can one remit more than another ? Notice what has just been said, that one indulgence, in itself, is not greater than another ; but on account of exterior circumstances, such as, for instance, the greatness of the person who grants it, or the cause for which it is granted, or the number of persons who desire to gain it, it may be said that one is greater than another. Taken in this sense, we may consider today's indulgence as the *great* indulgence. Moreover, we do not deceive the people by pretending that Christ bestowed it upon all churches ; but once again, emphatically say that it was given by Christ only to those who visit the Church of Portiuncula ; but the Popes, as Vicars of Christ, have granted a plenary indulgence to those who visit, on this day, other Franciscan churches, and there reverently perform the prescribed devotions. In regard to the truth of the origin of this indulgence, it is great presumption to doubt or to reject it ; for, although the Catholic Church has not adopted it as a matter of faith, it has been carefully investigated and found well authenticated.

The doctrine of the Catholic Church in regard to indulgences consists chiefly of two parts, First : that the true church has power to grant indulgences ; and secondly : that indulgences

are beneficial to the spiritual welfare of the Christian people. This will suffice to instruct Catholics, and to refute the assertions of those who oppose and calumniate the holy indulgences.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The history of the seven Machabees and their heroic mother, is one of the most beautiful and instructive ever written, and is well worth reading more than once. Parents are taught by it how to instil into the hearts of their children, obedience to God and avoidance of sin; and children how to live according to their parent's precepts; while Christians, in general, are instructed by it how to keep the laws of God. The seven holy martyrs rather suffered the most terrible torments and cruel death, than touch the meats which God had forbidden them to use. This same God forbids you, on certain days, the use of certain food. Woe to you, if you allow yourself to be persuaded to partake of it through the bad example of others, or by their taunts and mockery, or from other frivolous excuses. The holy martyrs sustained themselves by the hope of the resurrection and of the recompense which they would one day receive in Heaven. Your body will also rise again. You will receive again all your limbs, either for eternal reward or eternal punishment, as you have used them in the service or to the displeasure of the Almighty. Woe to your tongue, your lips, your eyes, your hands and feet, if you do not use them better than you have done until now. *Lastly*, all should learn, what their conduct should be, when they are tempted to sin. We must fight and say: "No, I will not do it. I obey, not him who tempts me, but the Lord, my God. I am ready to die rather than transgress the laws of God." And let those who tempt others to sin, consider well what one

of the martyrs said to Antiochus: "Thou shalt not escape the hand of the Lord;" and another: "Wait patiently, and thou shalt recognize, in thy punishment, the power of the Almighty."

II. Esteem indulgences highly; for they are a sign of the great mercy of Christ to us and an inestimable fruit of His merits. Endeavor most earnestly to gain them. Non-Catholics are very wrong in rejecting and calumniating them, but those Catholics are not less wrong who do not value them or strive to gain them. No less wrong are they who think they have gained them by simply going to confession and communion, or by saying, without special devotion, the ordained prayers. We must be very zealous if we desire to gain an indulgence; the conscience must be purified and the prayers said with great devotion. We must not flatter ourselves that when we have gained an indulgence—of which we can never be sure—our obligation to do penance and good works ceases. For, God demands that you also should contribute to the expiation of your sins and the obtaining of eternal life. It is written: "Do penance. Bring forth, therefore, fruits worthy of penance." (Matth. iii.) God has mercy on us, but He also says: "Give thou also something: not because I have need of thee, but because it is my will that thou shouldst contribute something towards thy welfare," says St. Chrysostom. St. Cyprian admonishes us, thus: "The Lord must be implored. He must also be conciliated by our atonement. We must practice good works."

THE THIRD DAY OF AUGUST.

THE FINDING OF THE RELICS OF ST. STEPHEN, THE FIRST MARTYR.

After St. Stephen, the first martyr, had been stoned to death by the Jews for having incontestably proved that Christ, whom they had crucified, was the true Messiah, some pious men, filled with deep sorrow, buried him with all due reverence. Foremost among these was Gamaliel, who had formerly been a teacher, and later a disciple of St. Paul. He arranged everything so that the body of St. Stephen was carried, during the night, by some Christians, from the spot in which it lay, to his country-seat, which was a few miles from Jerusalem. In the course of time and in consequence of the persecution of the Christians in Judæa, the location of his tomb was forgotten, until it pleased the Almighty to reveal it in the time of the Emperor Honorius. There lived, at that period, in the place where St. Stephen was buried, a priest of the church of Jerusalem, named Lucian. Gamaliel appeared to this holy man in his sleep and disclosed to him where the bodies of St. Stephen, Nicodemus, his son Abibon, and his own were lying, telling him, at the same time, to inform St. John, Bishop of Jerusalem, of this fact, and to say that it was the will of God that he should exhume them for the benefit of many men. Lucian awakening, and fearing it was but a dream, or perhaps even a delusion from Satan, did not tell the Bishop, but humbly prayed to God that, if it were a revelation from on high, He would grant him a repetition of the vision. To this effect, Lucian continued in prayer and fasting for eight days, when Gamaliel again appeared to him and repeated all he had said before. Lucian did not yet obey, but to be more certain, fasted and prayed eight days more. Gamaliel appeared to him for the third time, and, with a severe countenance, reproving him for not believing his words, commanded him to make the Bishop acquainted with the facts immediately, in order that the faithful might no longer be deprived of the benefits which they would obtain by the intercession of St. Stephen and the other Saints. After this third apparition, Lucian could no longer doubt; and, betaking himself to the Bishop of Jerusalem, he communicated to him all that had happened. The joy of the holy Bishop and Patriarch was exceedingly great. He called the bishops and priests of the neighboring churches, and, accompanied by them and a great number of Christians, he went to the place indicated, and had the satisfaction of finding four coffins, on which were engraven

the names of the saints above mentioned: St. Stephen, St. Nicodemus, St. Abibon, St. Gamaliel. When the coffins were reverently opened, there issued from them a fragrance as if the place had been filled with blooming flowers. More than seventy persons, some of whom were sick and others possessed by evil spirits, were instantly restored to health, or relieved of their torments on touching the sacred relics, especially those of St. Stephen. The body of the protomartyr was carried with great solemnity to Jerusalem, and deposited in the church of Sion, the oldest and largest church in that city. During the reign of Theodosius the Younger, it was transported to Constantinople, and thence to Rome in the reign of Pope Pelagius I. The remarkable discovery of the relics of St. Stephen and the miracles, which had been wrought at their touch, were soon known all over the Christian world. The heretics, who, at that time persecuted the church, were ashamed, and the faithful strengthened in the true faith and animated in their veneration for the protomartyr. All countries and cities applied for portions of the relics, and many were favored with them, to the great benefit of the people. Many received only some of the earth in which the holy body had rested; others, a piece of linen which had touched his coffin; but by the pious use of them, as many miracles were wrought as by the relics themselves. In St. Austin we have an indisputable witness of this, as he lived at the time of the discovery. Among other things, he tells us, in the twenty-second book of the "City of God," of many great miracles wrought, in his presence, by these relics, in the city of Hippo, of which he was bishop, as also in adjacent countries. A few of these we will here relate. A blind woman's sight was immediately restored, by touching her eyes with a flower, which at her request had been laid on the relics of St. Stephen. Lucilus, a bishop, was cured of a dangerous fistula by devoutly carrying the sacred relics. Eucharis, a priest, arose again to life, when they placed upon his corpse a tunic which had rested on St. Stephen's body. Two men suffering with gout were cured by the same. A lad who was killed by being run over by a carriage, was not only restored to life, but his broken limbs were healed. A nun who had died, returned to life and health when her habit was laid on her after it had touched the sacred relics. Eleusinus placed the corpse of his child upon the spot where the relics of the saint had rested, and immediately the child lived again. Upon the head of Martial, a hardened Jew, his brother-in-law—a Christian—laid a flower, which had been on the altar near the relics, and the next day the Jew requested to be baptized. Two sisters, who were afflicted with epilepsy, were in-

stantly cured by these relics. Many other miracles are narrated by St. Austin, and he concludes with these words: "If I alone were to relate what I know of the miraculous cures performed by St. Stephen at Calama and in its neighborhood, I should have to write many books, and yet not be able to collect all of them." What does a non-Catholic think or say on reading or hearing these and many other things which the holy Fathers have written of the sacred relics? He rejects all these histories, and accuses St. Austin and other great teachers of falsehood and superstition. But if he believes even *one* of these miracles, how can he, according to the doctrines of his religion, condemn the veneration of relics and the invocation of the saints?

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The many miracles which God wrought through the relics of St. Stephen, are a certain sign that the veneration of sacred relics and the invocation of the Saints are pleasing to Him and beneficial to us. If they had not been allowable, or not agreeable to the Almighty, He would not have wrought the miracles nor would He have bestowed such remarkable grace upon those who venerated the relics, or invoked the Saints. Be not misled, therefore by those who speak with contempt of sacred relics or reject and denounce the veneration and invocation of the Saints. Honor as was the ancient custom, the sacred relics, and reverence the Saints and implore their intercession, as friends of God, and our faithful advocates around His throne. The church has never adored Saints or relics. To those, therefore, who say to you, "The Catholics practice idolatry with the Saints and their relics," give the same answer that Daniel gave to each of the wicked judges, to whom he said: "Well hast thou lied against thy own head." "Imbecile!" writes St. Jerome to the heretic Vigilantius, "who has ever adored the holy martyrs? Who has taken man to be a God?" And elsewhere he says: "We honor the sacred relics because

they are of those men who became martyrs for the sake of Him whom we worship. We honor the servants, that the honor we bestow upon them may go to the Almighty, who says: "They who receive you, receive me." Well may non-Catholics be opposed to sacred relics, as they are a continual proof of the truth of our holy religion, such as they cannot bring forward for their's; for never yet has any one died in their belief, at whose tomb miracles have been wrought by the power of the Almighty. Should not this alone be sufficient to open their eyes and bring them to the knowledge of the truth?

II. God revealed where the body of St. Stephen lay, and caused him to be greatly honored on earth; still greater will be the glory of this sacred body, when at the resurrection, it will be again united to the soul. Your body will also be reunited to your soul, on the day of resurrection; for our faith teaches us, that we shall rise from the dead, and receive again the body which is now our's on earth. The reason for this is, that our body, which now partakes of our good or evil deeds, must then receive either the punishment or recompense we deserve. Hence there will be a great difference between the bodies of the just and those of

sinner. Among other gifts, the body of the just will receive great beauty. Its splendor will surpass the brightness of the stars ; while the body of the sinner will be more hideous and repulsive than we can imagine. The soul of the just, united to the body, will rise to Heaven, where both will enjoy more bliss than the mind of man can conceive ; while the soul of the sinner, with his body, after the judgment, will be precipitated into hell and there suffer inexpressible pains and torments, for all eternity. How will your body fare ? Although I have already answered this question, several months ago, I will do so again. If you use the members of your body to commit sin and offend God, rest assured that, with your soul, it will be banished into hell, where it will suffer the most excruciating pain, as long as God remains God. If however, you use your body in the service of the Almighty, keep it unspotted by sin, patiently carry the crosses and trials God sends you to bear, it will, with your soul, be received into Heaven, where it will enjoy unspeakable happiness, as long as God remains God. Hence if you love your body and desire for it eternal bliss, use it as long as you

are on earth in the service of the Almighty, after the example of St. Stephen. Do not defile it with sin and vice. Bear patiently all it has to suffer, and do not use its members as instruments to offend Him who has given them to you. Consecrate it entirely to God and his service, according to the admonition of St. Paul, who says : " I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies, a living sacrifice, wholly pleasing unto God ; your reasonable service. " (Rom. xii.) Besides this, remember the advice which you have heard, and use it to your own benefit. If your body desires anything wrong, refuse it ; otherwise it will have to suffer for it. If it encounters a difficulty in the service of God, if it has to suffer pains, use all the strength of your soul to make it suffer without complaint ; as it will be greatly rewarded. Console yourself with the hope of your future resurrection, and reward, as the Machabees and other holy martyrs and confessors have done. Say with Job : " I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day, I shall rise out of the earth and shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God. " (Job, xix.)

FOURTH DAY OF AUGUST.

ST. DOMINIC.

St. Dominic, the glorious patriarch and founder of the famous Order of the Friars Preachers, was born in Spain of illustrious and pious parents. His mother, before his birth, had a vision in her sleep, in which it seemed to her that she was bearing a little dog, which carried in its mouth a burning torch that illuminated the whole world. At the time of his baptism, a noble matron saw a bright star on the brow of Dominic. By this

God probably intended to foreshadow the future labors of St. Dominic and their effect ; how, by his sermons, he would drive away the heretics—those veritable wolves in the Christian fold—and how while he illumined the whole world with his teaching and virtues, he would at the same time inflame it with love of God. Dominic evinced, in his earliest youth, a love of virtue quite unusual for his age. He would rise in the middle of the night to pray ; he was extremely moderate in eating and drinking, and modest in all his ways. He detested all worldly amusements, avoided all questionable society, was compassionate towards the poor, and sought all his pleasure in prayer, in visiting the churches and in study. He acquired knowledge suitable for his station in life, was sent to the most renowned Universities, where he never departed, in the least, from his pious course. He preserved his innocence and purity unspotted till his death, and the means which he employed to do this were, avoidance of idleness, and of intercourse with the other sex ; temperance in eating and drinking.

After having finished his studies with great honor, James Azebedo, bishop of Osma, received him into the number of the regular canons. When thirty years of age, he began to preach, and continued for two years, with great success. After this he accompanied the bishop to France, which was, at that period, greatly disturbed by the heresy of the Albigenses. When they arrived at their destination they took lodgings in a house where the people were tainted with the heresy ; but Dominic soon convinced them of their error and they returned to the true faith. They were the first of the heretics converted, and Dominic consecrated the first fruits of his labors, in profound gratitude, to the Almighty, feeling within himself a daily increasing desire to devote himself entirely to the extermination of this new heresy. Obeying the admonition of the Divine Voice that spoke to his heart, he asked of the Pope the necessary permission and prepared himself with a few other zealous priests, by prayers, fasts and other penances, for so great a work. After this, taking a staff in his hand, in imitation of the holy Apostles, he wandered barefooted through all the cities and villages where the Albigenses had sown the seed of their heresy, preached with great zeal the truths of the Catholic faith and refuted the errors of the heresy, without allowing himself to be in the least disturbed by the ravings of the enemies of the church. Authentic historians say that he converted more than 100,000 heretics to the truth faith. The gift of miracles which God bestowed upon his unwearied apostle to confirm his words, added much to his influence. The Albigenses had written a book filled

with heretical doctrines, which they gave the Catholics to read. St. Dominic refuted this by another book, and to convince the people that his was the true one, he threw both into the fire, in the presence of a crowd of heretics and faithful. The heretical book was instantly seized by the flames and consumed, while the book written by the Saint remained intact, raised itself up, fluttered a little while in the air, and then lighted upon a beam to the utter amazement of the spectators. This miracle was repeated a second and a third time, and not only strengthened the faith of the Catholics, but confounded the heretics. At another time, when the celebrated Count Montfort, with a small force of Catholics numbering 1800 men, attacked a large army of Albigenses, St. Dominic by floods of tears, obtained from God so signal a victory for the Catholics, that 20,000 of the enemy remained upon the field of battle, others were driven into the river and drowned and the rest were routed. It is also related that this holy man relieved many who were possessed, cured many who were sick, and raised the dead to life. These and similar miracles could not fail to obtain for the Saint the veneration of men, and they were the means of converting many heretics. To preserve these in the true faith and to bring others to the knowledge of the truth, he resolved to found an order, the principal aim of which would be to preach the Gospel, to lead sinners to repentance, confirm Catholics in their faith, and convert the heretics. Pope Innocent III. at first refused to give his consent to this plan; but, one night, he dreamed that the walls of the Lateran church appeared to fall, but were supported by St. Dominic, and saved from the impending destruction; he concluded from this that St. Dominic had been elected by God to be the pillar of His church, and no longer withheld his consent to the founding of the new order. Pope Honorius III. who followed Pope Innocent, confirmed the order, to the great comfort of the Saint. It may, in truth, be said that by means of this order, the destruction which menaced the whole world through the heretics and false teachers, was averted. One night, when St. Dominic prayed in the church of St. Peter, he saw Christ sitting on a throne in the clouds, surrounded by indescribable splendor. He held three spears in his hand to punish the world with three chastisements, famine, war and pestilence, because of the iniquity of the people. Not one of the Saints dared to oppose the anger of God with prayers. At last, the Blessed Virgin herself came to His feet, and humbly asked mercy for those whom He had redeemed with His precious blood. She assured Him that St. Dominic and St. Francis, who was then in Rome, to obtain the approval of his order, and their brethen, would do all

in their power to move the sinful world to repentance and reformation. The prayers of His Blessed Mother appeased Christ, and He approved of the intentions of the two holy men. This vision was not only a great comfort to St. Dominic, but an incentive to use all his endeavors to reach the end he had proposed to himself. For many years he strove, with incomparable zeal, to accomplish his design, when it pleased the Almighty to call him to receive the reward of his unwearied labors. He received the announcement of his death from Our Lord Himself, who appeared to him during his prayers and said: "Come, come to enjoy true happiness." After this, he fell ill, and having made his confession, he so fervently and devoutly received the Blessed Sacrament, that he drew tears from the eyes of all who were near him. Before his end, he exhorted his disciples to obedience, poverty, chastity, and brotherly love. He further commanded them to work zealously for the salvation of souls, to trust unwaveringly in God, to love their heavenly Father above all things, to avoid idle discourses, to speak only with or of God. At last he requested them to read aloud for him the usual prayers for the departing soul. When they came to the words: "Come to his assistance, ye Saints of God, come forth to meet him, ye Angels of the Lord, receiving his soul, offer it to the Most High," he calmly closed his eyes and gave up his soul, filled with so many merits, into the hand of God, in the year 1221, the 50th of his age. He left to posterity, not only the holy Order which he founded, but the most noble example of virtue. His heart was filled with the love of God; hence he endeavored most assiduously to prevent others from offending the Divine Majesty and to move sinners to repentance. Frequently he passed the whole night in prayer and in chastising his body, offering it to God for the conversion of sinners, saying that he would willingly give every drop of his blood, if by it he were able to prevent a single sin, or to convert a sinner. It was his wish to suffer and to give his life for the love of Christ. Humility made him three times refuse a bishopric. He desired nothing but to work for the salvation of souls, to suffer and be despised. Towards himself he was extremely severe; he constantly wore a rough hair-shirt, fastened around the loins with an iron chain, drawn so tightly, that it cut into the flesh. The steps of the altar or the bare boards were his bed. He scourged himself three times each night, first for his own sins; secondly for the sins of other men; and thirdly, for the souls in purgatory. His life was, besides, a continual fast. He never tasted meat. To live on alms and to aid the poor was all he desired. While he was still a student, he sold his books and clothes more

than once, and gave the money to the poor. To a widow who asked him for alms to release her son from captivity, he offered himself as ransom, so that her son might return to her. Many other splendid examples of admirable virtues must be omitted here, for want of space; but the great devotion he always entertained for the Queen of Heaven must be mentioned. This devotion arose from his great love for her. He began nothing without invoking her assistance with filial confidence, and he disseminated veneration for her by the use of the Rosary, which the Almighty deigned to confirm by many miracles. He advised Blanche, the pious Queen of France, who had no issue, to have recourse to the Divine Mother, and to say the rosary devoutly in her honor. Blanche followed his advice and in the course of time, gave birth to Louis, the holy and celebrated Catholic king. To the devout use of the rosary is also ascribed the above-mentioned victory of Montfort over the Albigenses; for, the Catholic soldiers, at the instance of St. Dominic, wore the rosary around their necks, and thus under the protection of the Blessed Virgin, attacked and defeated the enemy. How many miracles the Almighty performed after St. Dominic's death, at his intercession, is to be found in the books of those authors who have written his life more minutely.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

The life of St. Dominic is filled with examples of the most perfect virtues, of which we can, however, now only select a few for practical consideration.

I. First, three means were used by this holy man to preserve his innocence and purity among many dangers; and these were: Avoidance of idleness, of intercourse with the other sex, and temperance in eating and drinking. If he had abandoned himself to idleness, entertained much unnecessary communication with the other sex, and had been less temperate in his meals, his purity would soon have been endangered and perhaps lost. If you would be pious and chaste, let me recommend these three means; for Holy Writ, as well as experience, teaches us that persons who do not occupy themselves with work suit-

able to their station in life, who, without necessity have much intercourse with the opposite sex, or who are not temperate in eating and drinking, do not long remain pious, innocent and chaste. Such persons fall easily into temptation and yield to it, because they givethemselves the opportunity; while others either suffer no temptations at all or overcome them easily, as they are strengthened by the Almighty for the combat; for, it is a well known proverb, that "God helps those who help themselves." But how can he, who does not endeavor to help himself, but rather does the contrary, expect particular graces from the Almighty?

II. St. Dominic gave his whole life to the service of God and to the practice of good works and the salvation of souls. He used all his

abilities to reform sinners, convert heretics and thus open Heaven to all. Through his love for God, he endeavored to prevent all offenses against His Majesty. It is not surprising then that Christ invited him to come and partake of eternal joys. How do you pass your life? In whose service? For what are your solicitations? Were you ever the means of bringing a sinner to repentance or a heretic to the true faith? Have you ever endeavored to lead a single soul upon the road of everlasting life? Have you ever prevented one single sin, which it was so easy to do, and which perhaps, in your office or occupation, it was your duty to do? Try henceforth to do it, and if you can do nothing else, pray at least for the conversion of sinners and heretics, and offer your good deeds to the Almighty for this end. Prevent offenses to God when you are able. Let love for your Creator inspire you to do this. "If you love Jesus with your whole heart, how can you be silent when He is offended in your presence?" says St. Bernard. "How can you say that you love God, when you despise His laws?" "Who can say: "I love

the emperor, but his laws I do not esteem?" asks St. Ambrose.

III. St. Dominic, desiring to further the devotion to the Blessed Virgin, instituted the use of the rosary, and God has confirmed it by many miracles. There are in our time, many families, who either daily or on Sundays and holidays, say the rosary. Many Catholics, the laity as well as the clergy, daily do the same. Only heretics and Catholics who are no honor to the church, are ashamed to be seen with the rosary in their hands. May you not be among their number! It is well known that, to evince their love to their Saviour and His Blessed Mother, many Saints, at the hour of their death, would have a crucifix and a rosary in their hands. If you desire to die happily, as they did, follow also, their example during life, that you may have the right to say: "O Lord, I am thy servant, I am thy servant and the son of thy handmaid," (Psalm lxxv.), that is, the son of her who, though chosen to be the mother of the Most High, still called herself his handmaid: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord." (Luke, ii.)

FIFTH DAY OF AUGUST.

THE DEDICATION OF ST. MARY AD NIVES—ST. OSWALD, KING.

The Catholic Church celebrates to-day the annual feast of the dedication of a very remarkable church at Rome, called St. Mary Ad Nives—"St. Mary of the Snow," or "St. Mary Major." The origin of this church is as follows: In the middle of the fourth century, at the time of Pope Liberius, there resided at Rome a nobleman named John. Although rich in temporal goods, he was still wealthier in those which are not of this world, and his wife was his equal in birth, riches and virtue. They had been married many years without having been blessed with children,

although they had often prayed to God for them. At last, they resigned themselves to the will of Providence, and resolved to employ all their wealth in honor of the Blessed Virgin, and make her heir to it, as they had always entertained great devotion for her.

They were, as yet, uncertain as to the manner in which they should carry out their intention. They both sought refuge in prayer and alms, begging the Blessed Virgin to teach them how they might best appropriate their possessions to her honor.

Mary, the Divine Mother, deigned to make her wishes known to them. Appearing to them both in the night, she told them to go, on the following day, which was the fifth of this month, to the *Æsquiline* mount, in Rome, and to build a church in her honor on the spot which they would find covered with snow. This, she added, would be more agreeable to her than anything else they could do. When they awoke next morning and told each other their dream or rather their vision, they were filled with inexpressible joy, and immediately repaired to Pope Liberius to hear his opinion on the subject. As the Pope had had the same vision the same night, there was no longer reason to doubt the truth of the revelation. Assembling the clergy and people without delay, the Pontiff formed a procession to go to the appointed spot. When they arrived there, they saw, in truth, a place large enough for a church, covered with snow. All were greatly surprised at this, which they could not but consider a miracle, since it was in the midst of summer, on the fifth of August, when neither in Rome nor within many miles of it, any snow could naturally have fallen. The pious couple drew from this fact the greatest comfort, as it was an indication that the Almighty and the Blessed Virgin were pleased with their intention. Therefore, hesitating no longer, they forthwith made all the necessary preparations for building a magnificent temple. The building was begun and very soon completed. All that was needed for its erection, as well as for its maintenance, was joyfully furnished. Pope Liberius most solemnly consecrated the new temple; and all the faithful went to it to venerate the Queen of Heaven. At first, this church was called the *Basilica*, signifying a palace, or the *Liberian Basilica*, on account of its royal magnificence. It was also called *St. Mary ad Nives*, for the reason mentioned above. To-day it is known as the *St. Mary Major*, or the *Great*, as it is the greatest of all the churches of Rome built in honor of the Blessed Virgin, on account of its origin, magnificence and rich endowment. It is also called *St. Mary ad Praesepe*—*St. Mary of the Manger*—because in one of its chapels, the crib or manger, in which the

new-born Saviour was placed by his virgin mother, is kept. Pope Gregory the Great, in 599, formed and led the great procession, celebrated in the annals of the church, to implore God, through the intercession of Mary, to avert the dreadful pestilence which ravaged Rome. Its fury somewhat abated, but as it was still in the city, the Pope, in the following year, formed a second procession, headed by the picture of the Blessed Virgin painted by St. Luke, which is kept in the church of St. Mary ad Nives. During the procession, the pestilence left all those houses by which the picture passed, until, at last, when the faithful dispersed, the whole city was free from the terrible scourge. Another miraculous event occurred during the procession, which must not be omitted. Angels were heard singing: "Rejoice, O Queen of Heaven, Alleluia. He whom thou didst deserve to bear, Alleluia! is risen as He said, Alleluia!" The holy Pope, prostrating himself with all the people, finished the angels' hymn of praise with the words: "Pray for us to God, Alleluia!" When the procession had reached the Mausoleum, or tomb of the Emperor Adrian, the Pope saw upon its summit an angel sheathing his sword, as a sign that the wrath of the Almighty was appeased by the intercession of Mary, and that the pestilence which had so long ravaged the city, would disappear. The rejoicing of the people, and the devotion which was from that time shown to the miraculous picture of the Blessed Virgin, cannot be worthily described.



St. Oswald, King of England, was the son of heathen parents, and was partially educated by them. After his father Ethelfrid had lost a battle against Redwald and been slain, Oswald had to flee from England with his two brothers and several other noblemen, and seek safety in Scotland. Here he found not only what he had sought, but becoming acquainted with some Christians, he also acquired a knowledge of the Catholic faith, and after being carefully instructed in its doctrines, he, with his two brothers, received baptism. After the death of Edwin, the English conferred the crown first upon his brother and later upon him. His first care was to establish the Christian religion in his domains, and banish the tyrant Cadwalla, a bitter enemy to the Christians, who cruelly persecuted them. The tyrant had at his disposal an immense army, which he called "The Invincible." Oswald placed his trust in God, and marched with his soldiers against the far superior numbers of the enemy. He had the cross carried at the head of his army, to show that he placed his

trust in Him who died upon the cross for us. The battle was fought, and ended in a complete victory over Cadwalla, who was slain. Oswald, returning in triumph, gave due thanks to the Almighty, and endeavored to convert all his subjects to the Christian faith. To accomplish this, he besought the Scots to send him a bishop and some pious priests, that they might instruct the people in the word of God, and administer the affairs of the church. The Scotch sent him Aidan, a truly holy prelate, with some other pious priests. They preached the Gospel with such fervor and zeal, and God confirmed their teachings by so many miracles, that in a short time the number of those converted became so great, that the king had to call for more priests, for whom he built churches and convents at different places, endowing them most generously. He was exceedingly happy to contemplate the growth of the Christian religion, and made it his greatest care to disseminate it still more. Penda, king of Mercia, a pagan and a bitter enemy of the Christians, enraged at Oswald's pious efforts, invaded his dominions with his wild hordes. The holy king went to meet him as he had gone to meet Cadwalla, but with a very different result. God, always just, though often incomprehensible to the feeble understanding of human minds, decreed that Oswald's army should be vanquished, and he himself should lose his life. Thus ended the days of the holy king, who had always endeavored to labor for the honor of God and His holy religion; and he received, in exchange for his temporal crown, the glorious crown of martyrdom, as he lost his life in the defence of the true faith, in the year of Our Lord, 642. Besides his untiring zeal in planting and spreading the knowledge of the holy Gospel, every one admired in this holy king the more than fatherly love and generosity he ever displayed towards the poor. A great many of them received their daily food at his palace, and he allowed none to leave him without alms. He had a special servant appointed to attend to the poor. One Easter-Sunday, when bishop Aidan was at the table with Oswald, this servant came and said that several poor people were in the court yard begging alms. The pious king, without hesitation, took a silver dish filled with meat, and handing it to the servant, told him to give not only the meat, but the dish also to the poor. The holy bishop, deeply touched by this noble deed, taking the generous hand of the king, said: "May this hand never corrupt." This wish was granted by the Almighty. After Penda had slain the king, he had his head and right hand cut off and fastened on a picket. A year later, when Oswald's successor to the crown, took them off, they were entirely incorrupt. The head and body were buried in the church at Lindisfarne, but

the right hand was brought to the capital, Bamborough, and, with great ceremony, deposited in St. Peter's church, where God wrought many miracles, by means of it, on the sick and infirm.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Those who are not Catholics and who blame us for our veneration of the Queen of Heaven and for the churches built in her honor, may see by the origin of the church of St. Mary ad Nives, how ancient this pious practice is, and how agreeable to God. The building of this celebrated church took place in the fourth century, at a time when Protestants themselves say that the Catholic Church was still the true Church of God. Even at that remote period, Mary was venerated and churches were built in her honor. The church approved of it, and God confirmed it by special miracles. Who dares say that the Church of Christ erred, and that God himself confirmed that error by a miracle? Even in countries where the population has ceased to be Catholics, we find ancient churches which were built in honor of the Blessed Virgin. Surely, if all Catholics were silent on the subject, the very stones of these sacred edifices would prove the devotion of the early ages to the Divine Mother. Would any one dare to accuse the pious Christians, who built these churches, of having erred? This would be no less foolish than arrogant. Why then do they oppose the church of ancient date? My Catholic reader, take my advice. Let no one disconcert you in your devotion to the Queen of Heaven, and never become cold in her service.

II. The pious couple chose the Blessed Mother as heiress to all their possessions, and hence built a magnificent temple, according to divine instructions, to her honor. St. Os-

wald gave the greater part of his treasures for the defence and dissemination of the true faith, and for the comfort of the poor. Oh! how great was their consolation for this in their last hour, and how much glory did they gain in Heaven! How much greater the fame they attained even in this world, than if they had used their wealth to procure costly garments, or other worldly luxuries, or in building splendid palaces, or if they had left it to friends or devoted it to vain and worldly purposes. If God has blest you with more temporal goods than others, be not of those whose only concern is to leave a large fortune to their children or relations, to whom it will perhaps be the means of offending God and drawing upon themselves eternal punishment, or who will soon forget their parents or benefactors and cease to pray for them. Do not forget the churches, the hospitals, the poor. This will give you comfort in your dying hour, and you will be better able to justify yourself before the judgment-seat of the most High, when you are called to give an account of your stewardship.

Consider well the words of Theophilactus: "We are not really the masters of our temporal goods, and we possess nothing that is truly ours. We are only the stewards of the means which God has entrusted to us, that we may distribute them according to His orders." Have you hitherto used or distributed the goods given to you according to the will of the Almighty? What will your conduct be in future? St. Augustine gives you a short but

beautiful exhortation : " Have you no riches ?" says he : " do not seek them in this world by evil deeds ; but if you possess them, take heed that you store them up for heaven by good deeds."

THE SIXTH DAY OF AUGUST.

ST. AFRA, MARTYR.

The Holy Church to-day commemorates the feast of Christ's Transfiguration upon Mount Thabor, but as this is sufficiently familiar to all from the Gospel, I will here give the life of St. Afra, whose name is recorded in the Roman Martyrology on the 5th of August, as it may serve to comfort and reanimate many souls.

The native place of St. Afra is not known. Some write that she was born in the island of Cyprus, others, at Augsburg, at that time a heathen city. It is quite certain that she lived in that city, blinded by heathenism, and led the life of a prostitute. When, at the time of Dioclesian and Maximian, the Christians were most cruelly persecuted in Spain, St. Narcissus, bishop of Gerona, in Spain, and his deacon Felix, by the especial decree of Providence, came to Augsburg. As they were entirely unacquainted in the city, they took lodging in the first house they came to, which was the one in which Afra lived. Whilst she was preparing their supper, she perceived that they prayed most devoutly ; and when they came to table she saw them make the sign of the cross and noticed that they partook of but very little food. Surprised at this, she asked them who they were. Narcissus replied, that he was a bishop of the Christians, and was seeking to win souls for Heaven. Afra, frightened, dropped on her knees before him, and said that she was not worthy of such a guest, on account of the disorderly life she had been leading for so long a time. Requesting her to rise, he said : " Christ, whose gospel I preach, took lodgings with sinners, and sat at their table. Yes, it is for them that He came upon earth, and suffered a most cruel death." He told her moreover of His great kindness towards the great sinner, Magdalen, and of the means He had instituted to make all men partakers of His grace and to pardon their sins.

Afra was touched in her inmost heart, by the words of the bishop, and she was greatly rejoiced when he promised to cleanse her of all sin and make her a partaker of the inheritance

of Heaven, if she would, with a truly repentant spirit, receive holy baptism. She called her maids, Digna, Eutrepia, or Eutropia, and Eunomia; she related to them what she had heard, adding that she was determined to follow the bishop and become a Christian. The maids replied that she was their mistress and as they had sinned with her, they would reform with her and adopt the Christian faith.

Afra, pleased at their willingness, was also anxious that her mother Hilaria, who lived elsewhere, should be a partaker of the heavenly grace. Narcissus, therefore, repaired to her house and found her no less willing to receive the Christian faith than Afra and her maids had been. He began to instruct them and exhorted them, by prayer and fasting, and above all by true repentance for their sins to prepare for holy baptism. All this having been done according to his direction, Narcissus baptized them, admonished them to remain faithful, and then proceeded to lead others of the inhabitants of the city to the knowledge of the true God. He converted Afra's house into a church where he administered the Sacraments and preached the Gospel, and remained at Augsburg nine months, after which he returned to Spain, leaving a certain Dionysius in his place, whom he had consecrated bishop.

Nothing more painful could have happened Afra, than the departure of her holy teacher; but continuing in her penitential life, she allowed nothing to disturb her. She daily repented of her past life, constantly performed good deeds, and endeavored, with great zeal, to convert others. The number of Christians continually increased and it was the fervent desire of this holy penitent to give her life for her faith. God granted her wish; for, when, in 303 or 304, a cruel persecution of the Christians took place, Afra was taken prisoner and brought before the prefect Gajus. "Sacrifice to the gods," said he to her, "for it is better for you to live, than to die in pain and torments." "I have committed a great number of iniquities," replied Afra, "but the sin you command me to commit, I shall never be guilty of." Gajus tried to persuade her to return to her former life, as in this way she would gain great wealth. Indignantly she replied: "Never more shall my hand touch such accursed money. All I possessed, I have given to the poor." "But Christ does not esteem you, and those who have led such an unchaste life can never be called Christians." "I know that I am not worthy to be called a Christian," replied Afra, "but the mercy of God has deigned to confer upon me this name. Jesus Christ, my Lord, descended from Heaven to save sinners, and His Gospel testifies that He does not despise them; He even granted complete

absolution to a public sinner who bathed his feet with her tears." When the prefect understood, by these and similar words, that he could accomplish nothing by persuasion, he threatened her with death, saying: "Sacrifice to the Gods, or I will have you cruelly tortured and burnt to death." "That is what I desire," replied Afra; "the body, with which I sinned, may suffer all sorts of torments; but I will not stain my soul with such a crime." Gajus enraged, immediately gave orders to burn her alive, and the executioners seizing her, carried her over the river to an island, and bound her to a stake. The Christian heroine, turning her eyes to Heaven, cried aloud: "Jesus Christ! Thou hast come into the world to call not the just but the sinner to repentance; graciously accept this hour of suffering as my penance, and let this fire, which is prepared to consume my body, free me from the eternal flames which destroy both soul and body." Meanwhile, the wood was piled around her and lighted; but she, fearlessly standing up, broke out in the following words: "I give Thee thanks, Jesus Christ, that Thou hast deigned to accept me as a sacrifice, Thou, who becamest a sacrifice for the whole world; I offer myself to Thee, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, world without end, Amen." When she had said these words, the smoke suffocated her and her spirit departed, but her body remained unharmed by the fire. Her three maids standing on the other side of the river, witnessed her martyrdom. After all was over, they crossed the river, and finding the body uninjured, they hastened to tell her mother, Hilaria, who, with some priests, went in the night and took the body secretly and buried it with all due honors, not far from Augsburg. Hilaria and the maids remained for some time at the grave to pray; and returned the next day and for several days after; until the prefect hearing of it, sent his officers to tell them, that if they refused to sacrifice to the gods, they, too, should be burned alive. As neither Hilaria nor the maids would consent to this, they were seized and burned without further examination.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. Afra, a prostitute, reformed, became a zealous Christian and a holy martyr. This was surely a greater miracle, than if many dead had been raised to life. What cannot the grace of God perform, if man earnestly works with it! It is true that there is no sin from which</p>	<p>it is so difficult to extricate one's self as from unchastity; yet we have, in St. Augustine, an example of its possibility. It can be done. It needs only strong resolution. If you are free from this sin, give thanks to God and be careful to remain unspotted. If, however, you</p>
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have followed the sinful Afra, follow her also in her repentance and penance. Make a strong resolution. As soon as Afra recognized the danger in which she stood of eternal perdition, on account of her sins, and heard of the infinite mercy of Jesus Christ, who is ever ready to absolve the greatest sinner, she immediately became a convert to christianity and began a severe penitential life. She never again returned to her former vices. You also know, or can easily learn, the danger of eternal perdition into which your sin places you, and the immeasurable mercy of the Redeemer, who could have a thousand times taken you while in sin, but who has spared you till this hour. He is ready to pardon your iniquities. Therefore hasten to repent and do penance. Penance or hell! Which of these will you choose?

II. St. Afra committed her sins while in the darkness of heathenism. As soon as she had become a Christian, she sullied her soul no more, either with her former sins, though they had become habitual to her, or with any other, "I have sinned enough," said she. She repented of her sins as long as she lived, and wept over them, offering her suffering as atonement for her iniquities. This offers food for reflection and imitation for you. You have certainly committed sins, perhaps many sins. You ought to take care not to increase their number. You have already enough to expiate

and weep for, if you should live a thousand years. Daily repent of your sins, and offer to God in atonement every trial that makes your heart heavy and sore. Be careful henceforth, to fall no more into a sin against chastity; for, you must be aware that this sin is especially offensive to the Almighty, and is much more gross and hideous when committed by a Christian than by a heathen. Baptism makes the Christian a temple, a dwelling of the Almighty. How terrible, then, and how deserving of hell it is to desecrate this temple by that horrible vice and make room for the unclean spirit! The body of the Christian so often receives the most pure, the most holy flesh and blood of Christ. How horrible, then, when a body which has been nourished with such precious food, united so closely with Christ, wantonly leaves Him, giving itself as a sport to the unclean spirit. "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy. (I. Corinth. iii.) Do you not know that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot?" (I. Corinth, vi.) "Spare then, I pray thee," writes St. Cyril of Jerusalem, "spare your body as a temple of the Holy Ghost. Do not desecrate its dignity and greatness by a despicable sensuality."

SEVENTH DAY OF AUGUST.

ST. CAJETAN, FOUNDER OF THE THEATINE ORDER.

St. Cajetan, founder of the holy order, whose members are called Theatines, was born in 1487, at Vicenza, in Lombardy, of

noble and pious parents. Immediately after his baptism, his mother consecrated him to the Blessed Virgin, humbly begging her to guard him and take his spiritual welfare under her motherly protection. His entire after life proved how effectual his mother's prayers had been. He was never, even in his most tender years, like other children; his greatest pleasure consisted in praying, building small altars, giving alms to the poor, and being most perfect in his obedience to his parents. His whole conduct was such, that even in childhood, he was called a saint. He afterwards went to the University, and always made it his greatest care to preserve his innocence unspotted among so many temptations. Having received, at Padua, the degree of civil and canon laws, he repaired to Rome, where he was ordained priest, and preferred by Pope Julius II. to a high ecclesiastical position. After the death of the Pope, he resigned his dignity and returned to his home, desiring to work more effectually for the salvation of souls. He served the sick in and out of the hospitals, with untiring charity, in the time of pestilence. His labors were at first, confined to his native town; later, however, he went to Venice. His principal aim was to save souls. The sick, he persuaded by kind and gentle exhortations; and others he moved to virtue by his earnest sermons. The popular saying was, that Cajetan looked like a seraph when standing before the altar, and like an Apostle when in the pulpit. His devotion when he said mass, was equalled by his fervor and zeal while preaching. Whenever he had the opportunity, he tried to win a soul for the Almighty. After some time, he went again to Rome, where, inspired by God, and with the co-operation of three other pious and learned men, he founded an Order for such priests as desired to live an apostolic life, to reform the negligence of the clergy, and the corrupt morals of the people of the world; to observe carefully the sacred ceremonies of the church; restore the observance of pious conduct in the temples dedicated to the worship of the Most High; to labor in opposition to the heretics; assist the sick and dying, and in a word, to promote the welfare of men to the best of their ability. He imposed a special obligation on the members in regard to the vow of poverty; they were not only forbidden to have annual revenues, but even to ask alms. They had to leave the whole care of their subsistence to God, and wait patiently for what Providence would send them. Hard as this seemed to be, still many were found willing to bear such abject poverty. The first house of the order was at Rome; but it was abandoned after the first year, on account of an inroad of imperial soldiers, who also treated Cajetan with great cruelty. Among these soldiers there was

one who had formerly been acquainted with the Saint at Vicenza, and knew that, at that time, he was very rich. Believing that he still possessed great treasures, he tried to force them from him, by maltreating him most brutally, and several times casting him into prison. From Rome, the holy founder went to Venice, where he again nursed those stricken down with pestilence. He was then ordered by the Pope to Naples, to found a new house for his Order. This city had to thank the vigilance of this Saint, under God, for its preservation from heresy; for, several disciples of Luther, who at that time disseminated his poisonous doctrines in Germany, had come to Naples and begun privately, as well as publicly, to maintain, under the name of "Evangelical liberty," the teachings of Luther. They had also brought with them several books which contained the Lutheran doctrines, designing to give them to the people, and thus contaminate the city with the doctrines they contained. When St. Cajetan was informed of this, and had, moreover, seen the Evil One standing in the pulpit beside Bernardin Ochino, one of Luther's disciples, whispering into his ear every word that he preached, he notified the ecclesiastical authorities of these facts, and preached so zealously against the new heresy, that the heretical books were all given up and burnt, and the inhabitants of the city were preserved in the true faith. The Saint rendered the same service to several other cities in Italy.

The holy man was exceedingly severe towards himself. He never divested himself of his rough hair-shirt. Almost daily he scourged himself most mercilessly. In partaking of nourishment he was so temperate, that his life might justly be called a continual fast. He spent most of his nights in devout exercises, taking but a short rest upon straw. He never spoke except to honor God or benefit man. He was indefatigable in his exertions for the salvation of souls, and hence it is not surprising that God bestowed many graces upon him. One Christmas Eve, when he was passing the night in the Church of St. Mary Major, the Holy Child appeared to him, and the Blessed Virgin, who carried Him, laid Him into the Saint's arms, filling his soul with heavenly consolation. The holy man had many other visions during his life, and was often seen in a state of ecstasy during his prayers. He also possessed the gift of prophecy, and miraculously cured a great many sick. There was a priest of his Order, whose foot was to be amputated. The evening before the operation was to be performed, the Saint examined the foot, which was extremely swollen and affected with gangrene; he kissed it, made the holy sign of the cross over it, bandaged it anew, exhorting the sufferer to put his trust in God and to ask

the intercession of St. Francis. After this he turned to God in prayer. When on the following day, the surgeon came to perform the painful and dangerous amputation, they found, to their amazement, that the foot was healed.

When St. Cajetan sailed from Venice to Naples, a terrible storm arose, and all on board expected the boat to sink every moment. Cajetan took his Agnus Dei and threw it into the sea, which immediately became calm. His life is filled with similar events; we, however, having no space for more of them, will only relate how happily and with what heroic charity he ended his earthly career.

The authorities at Naples, civil as well as ecclesiastical, had resolved to institute the Inquisition in the city, to guard the faithful more thoroughly against heresy. The people were, however, opposed to it to such an extent, that a revolt was feared, and neither the exhortations and persuasions of St. Cajetan nor of other men were of any avail. The holy man was deeply distressed at the danger of so great a city and still more of so many souls. Hence he offered his life as a sacrifice to appease the wrath of the Almighty, praying that God would accept of it, restore peace, and spare the city and its inhabitants. The following event will show how pleased the Almighty was with this sacrifice. Soon after the Saint had offered himself to Heaven, he became dangerously sick, and repeating his offer, died a most peaceful and holy death, having had the privilege of seeing Christ and the Blessed Virgin. The Saviour assured him of his salvation, the Divine Mother of her protection until his death. And yet he would not die in any other manner than as a penitent; for when the physician said he needed a more comfortable bed, he protested most emphatically against it, saying that he would not, in his last hour, allow his body any comfort, but that he would be laid in his penitential robes upon ashes on the ground, adding: "There is no road leading to Heaven but that of innocence or repentance. He who has departed from the first, must take the second; else he is eternally lost." He received the last Sacraments with great devotion, turned his eyes towards Heaven, and rendered up his soul tranquilly to God, in the year of our Lord 1547. The strife in the city soon after ceased and peace was restored, as if God had wished to show that He had accepted the life of St. Cajetan as a peace offering for the salvation of innumerable souls. Many miracles were wrought by the Almighty to recompense the great faith which St. Cajetan manifested in the Divine Providence, when he instituted such complete poverty in his new order. After his death also, God honored him by working many miracles through his intercession.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I particularly desire that the last maxim which St. Cajetan gave on his death-bed should sink deeply into your heart. "There is no road to Heaven but that of Innocence or Penance." This is a truth which is founded upon Holy Writ. If then it is your earnest wish to go to Heaven, examine yourself carefully, and see if you are walking in the right path. How is it with your innocence? How with your penance? I leave it to you to answer these questions, and will only say, in the words of St. Cajetan: "If you have departed from the road of innocence, you must enter that of penance; else you are eternally lost." Having said this much to you, I will give you a few instructions on the life of this great servant of God.

I. St. Cajetan placed a special trust in God in regard to the necessities of life. Many persons are too much concerned about their temporal matters; others, too little; the latter lead an idle life, take no care of their homes, do not work according to their station in life, or squander their earnings or inheritance. But by far the greater number are too greedy of wealth. Their thoughts, from early morning till late at night, are occupied with their temporal affairs. They do not even take time to say a morning prayer or to assist at Holy Mass, because they fear to miss some thing by it, or think they neglect their household duties. They give not one thought to God or to their soul during the whole day. In short, they are as much absorbed in their temporal affairs, as if riches were the sole aim and object of their existence. They expect everything from their own exertions, not remembering that all success depends on the Almighty.

May you not belong to either of these classes. Work for your livelihood according to your position; avoid idleness; but above all, trust in God, who will assuredly not forsake you, if you do your duty. "Behold the birds of the air; for, they neither sow nor do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are you not of much more value than they? And for raiment why are you solicitous? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they labor not, neither do they spin. And if the grass of the field, which is to-day, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, God does so clothe; how much more you, O ye of little faith? Seek therefore first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all things shall be added unto you." (Matt. vi. ii.) St. Cajetan never suffered from want. God frequently assisted him by miracle. With many men it is quite different. They are often in want, and God does not assist them. For some, it is their own fault; for others, it is a trial. The latter must console themselves with the thought that this want serves them to obtain salvation. God wishes to lead them, like Lazarus, through poverty, into Heaven. Had Lazarus possessed worldly goods like the rich man, perhaps he would have had to suffer in hell like him. Therefore, they must not grieve over their poverty, but bear it with resignation. They must endeavor to lead a Christian life and put entire trust in God, and He will surely not forsake them. But those who have come to poverty, because they have been idle, or worked on Sundays or holidays without necessity, or sought for gain by unlawful means, should not be surprised, if they suffer want; for, how can they rea-

sonably expect to be blessed by the Almighty, if they so often, without shame or fear, transgress His commandments? Do they not know that God's curse threatens him who transgresses His laws?

"Cursed shalt thou be in the city, cursed in the field. Cursed shall be thy barn and cursed thy stores. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy womb and the fruit of thy ground, the herds of thy oxen and the flocks of thy sheep," etc. But the Almighty also promises His blessing to those who keep His com-

mandments: "Blessed shalt thou be in the city and in the fields; blessed shall be the fruit of thy womb and of thy ground, and the fruits of thy oxen and the droves of thy herds. Blessed thy barns," etc. (Deut. xxvii.) If men desire that God should help them in their poverty, they must resolve to keep His commandments better, to work according to their station, and take sufficient care of their affairs. "Behold, says He, this day I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Choose therefore life."

EIGHTH DAY OF AUGUST.

STS. CYRIACUS, LARGUS AND SMARAGDUS, MARTYRS; ST. ALBERT, CONFESSOR.

Maximian, a bitter enemy of the Christians, was chosen in 286, by the emperor Dioclesian, as his colleague in the empire. To show his gratitude, the new Cæsar had a magnificent palace built, to serve the emperor as a summer-residence; and he employed Christians, reduced to slavery, to labor at the building. An immense number of persons, young and old, rich and poor, the nobility and the commoners, were condemned to this work. They were given as little rest as the Israelites in Egypt had; they had constantly to roll stones, carry lime and sand, and were frequently beaten unmercifully as though they had been beasts of burden. Their only nourishment was bread and water, and of this, but little. Thrason, a Roman Patrician, who was secretly a Christian, was moved with compassion on seeing their sad condition, and endeavored to help the oppressed people as much as possible. To this end, he had recourse to his faithful friends who were also Christians, Cyriacus, Largus and Smaragdus. Through them he distributed alms and, sometimes, better nourishment among the ill-used followers of Christ. These three zealous Christians, the first of whom had been ordained deacon by the Pope, discharged this work of Christian charity fearlessly and with joy. As soon, however, as the heathen overseer detected them, they had to join the other Christians and perform the like

labor. They rejoiced to be thought worthy to suffer for Christ's sake, and did their work with great diligence for love of God : they even tried to assist others, especially a venerable old man, named Saturnine, who could not finish his task by the appointed time. This thoughtful kindness, under the existing circumstances, touched all who beheld it, except Maximian, who, when he heard of it, became so enraged, that he immediately gave orders to put them all three in chains and cast them into a dark dungeon. God, however, made His servants only the more famous ; for during their imprisonment, they restored sight to several blind persons, and cured others that were suffering from different maladies, by making the sign of the cross over them and pronouncing the holy name of Jesus. The fame of these miracles, reached the court of the emperor Dioclesian, just at the time when Artemia, his daughter, was possessed by the Evil Spirit. The emperor saw for himself how dreadfully she was tormented by Satan, and heard from her own lips that only Cyriacus, a Christian deacon, could release her. Though much embittered against the Christians, he was moved by his daughter's sufferings to suppress his hatred ; and had Cyriacus and his companions brought before him and requested him to free Artemia from the Evil One. The holy deacon said a short prayer and commanded Satan, in the name of Jesus Christ, to leave the princess immediately. Satan replied : " I must obey, because I cannot oppose the omnipotence of Jesus Christ ; but I shall go from here to the court of Persia." At that moment, Artemia was freed, and casting herself at the feet of St. Cyriacus, she gave him fervent thanks and declared before all that she would become a Christian.

Soon after, an ambassador came from the king of Persia, requesting Dioclesian to send the Christian deacon Cyriacus to him, as his daughter, Jobia, was possessed by the Evil One, and was incessantly crying, that only the deacon Cyriacus of Rome could release her. Cyriacus was accordingly sent with his companions to Persia, where, after he had released the princess, the king, his daughter and many other persons were induced to embrace Christianity. Cyriacus then returned to Rome and was not disturbed by Dioclesian ; but no sooner had the emperor left Rome to visit some other part of his dominions, than Maximian took the three holy friends prisoners, and had them beheaded, for their fidelity to Christ. They suffered in the year 303.

St. Cyriacus endured a terrible martyrdom before he was executed. As he did not cease preaching the Gospel, and deriding the idols, the prefect ordered boiling tar to be poured upon his

head. Notwithstanding this, the holy martyr continued to proclaim the truth and praised Christ till the sword ended his life.



To the short sketch of these holy martyrs, I will add a few words on the life of St. Albert, whose virtues the Roman Martyrology celebrated yesterday. This holy man was born in the kingdom of Sicily, in the city of Trapani. His parents, Benedict and Joan, were renowned for their ancient nobility and virtuous life. They lived twenty-seven years in the state of matrimony without issue. At last, addressing themselves to the Blessed Virgin, they vowed that if, through her intercession, they had a son, they would consecrate him in the Carmelite Order to the service of God and His Divine Mother. Their offering was graciously accepted, and they received a son, whom they named Albert. Before his birth, Joan and her husband dreamed that she had brought forth a lighted torch of wonderful brightness. The pious parents concluded from this that the Almighty had great designs upon their son and would lead him to great sanctity. Hence they directed all their care to giving him a most pious education. He had hardly reached his eighth year, when a rich and noble maiden was proposed to his parents for his future spouse. The father was not unwilling to accept the proposal, but the mother reminded him of the promise they had made in regard to their son, and after informing Albert of it, she begged him to assist them in keeping their vow. Showing his readiness to comply with their wishes, he went to the Carmelite convent, which was not far from the city, and asked admittance. The religious of the convent naturally hesitated to receive one so young, without the permission of his parents. The Blessed Virgin appeared, the same night, to his parents and reproved them for delaying to fulfil their promise. They, therefore, went with Albert to the Convent and requested the superior to bestow the habit upon him. Their wish was granted, and Albert, after giving his clothes to the poor at the Convent gate, entered the religious state with a cheerful heart. Young as he was, he was most prudent in all his actions, and his aspirations after spiritual perfection grew in proportion to his advance in age. Besides other virtues he particularly practised mortification. Three days each week he fasted most austerely, and continually wore a rough hair-shirt. He took his rest at night on a straw mattress. He never touched wine; and every Friday he mixed wormwood with his food to torment his palate with its bitterness, in remembrance of Our Saviour, whose thirst on the cross was appeased with

gall and vinegar. He was extremely watchful in preserving his purity; and in obedience and all other virtues, he served as a perfect model. All this secured to him, both in the monastery and throughout the whole city, a very high reputation for sanctity, which was augmented still more by the following event. The city of Messina had been besieged, for a long time, by the king of Naples. The provisions were nearly consumed, and many of the citizens had died from want of food. The people went in crowds to ask Albert to pray for them. Going to the Altar he said Mass for their intention. While he was offering the Holy Sacrifice, a voice was heard in the church, saying: "Albert, your prayer has been heard." At the same hour, there landed in the harbor, three large ships filled with grain, and no one knew whence they came. The inhabitants now took heart again and bravely withstood the enemy, whilst they also recognized, in the supernatural help they had received, how great Albert was in the sight of God.

Many other wonderful events are to be found in the life of this Saint; but we must leave others to relate them. Still more admirable were the miracles which he wrought, with the Divine assistance, on the souls of hardened sinners, especially the Jews, of whom he converted a great number to the Christian faith. Most of the years of his life after he was ordained priest, were passed in preaching the word of God. Finally, God revealed to him the hour of his death, and, in the painful malady from which he suffered, not a word of complaint passed his lips. He praised and glorified the Almighty until his soul ascended to Heaven, in the year of Our Lord, 1292. The many miracles wrought at his tomb increased the fame of his sanctity.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The three holy martyrs delightfully performed the hard work which was unjustly put upon them. Love for Christ caused them to be condemned to this labor, and love for Christ gave them the courage to bear it so nobly. They even endeavored to lighten the burden of another, whose strength was not sufficient for his work. Surely a magnanimous example of love for God and man! You are perhaps so situated, that you have to perform much and hard work. Reflect that God has placed you thus that you

may be able to obtain His grace, by faithfully attending to whatever you have to do. Frequently renew, during the day, the good intentions you made in the morning at your prayers, and think or say often: "Lord, for love of Thee!" Guard yourself against impatience, complaints and murmurs, as well against God as your superiors. Do every thing for love of God, and for His honor, and your work will help to your salvation and glorify you in heaven. If you are able to assist your neighbor in his work, neglect not to do it; it is

a noble deed of charity, which greatly pleases God and from which you may derive great benefit.

II. St. Cyriacus praised God during his greatest torments, and did not cease till he was executed. St. Albert, also, in his last sickness glorified the Almighty. To praise God in happiness, in bright and sunny days, is no great virtue ; but to glorify Him in dark hours, in pains, persecutions and adversity, is meritorious. Neither is it a proof of great virtue to praise God for a short time and then leave off ; but to bless Him constantly, in sorrow and rejoicing, in poverty or in plenty, and not to cease praising Him while

life lasts ; this is what brings men to that abode where His glories resound forever and ever. Thus, in ancient times, Tobias, Job and David acted. Tobias praised God in his blindness ; Job praised him in sickness and adversity ; David did the same through many sad events of his life, and in times of bitter persecutions. Cyriacus and the other holy martyrs all acted thus ; so did the holy confessors, virgins and other saints in every station of life. Thus do you also act, and say with the King David : " I will bless the Lord at all times ; His praise shall be for ever in my mouth." (Psalm xxxiii.)

NINTH DAY OF AUGUST.

ST. ROMANUS, SOLDIER AND MARTYR.

St. Romanus was the son of heathen parents, and having reached the years of maturity, he became a soldier in the body guard of the Emperor Valerian. His conversion to Christianity took place through the following circumstances. When the holy Deacon and martyr, St. Lawrence, was examined by the prefect about his faith and the treasures of the church, Romanus was present, with many other soldiers. The fearless answers of the Saint, the manner in which he opposed the worship of idols, the thorough proofs he cited while defending the Christian faith, gave Romanus the first gleams of Christianity and made him dissatisfied with his belief. When he afterwards saw St. Lawrence put upon the rack and barbarously scourged with sharp pointed lashes, without manifesting the least pain, the thought took possession of him that the faith which gave such strength to bear the most terrible tortures, must be true. This thought was strengthened when he suddenly saw, beside St. Lawrence, a youth, undoubtedly an angel, who wiped the perspiration from the brow and the blood from the wounds of the Saint, while at the same time he encouraged and consoled him. At the sight of this heavenly messenger, Romanus became thoroughly convinced that the religion which St. Lawrence preached must be

the true one, in which alone there was salvation, and he resolved to make use of the first opportunity to embrace it. God permitted that the tyrant Valerian should release St. Lawrence from the rack and send him back to prison, hoping that he might, by still greater torments, be forced to sacrifice to the gods. Hippolytus, who was secretly a Christian, was detailed to guard him. Romanus, taking advantage of this opportunity, went to St. Lawrence, cast himself at his feet, and informing him of the state of his mind and his resolution, begged to be baptized; he had brought water with him for the purpose. Although rejoiced at this conversion, St. Lawrence asked him if he was aware of the risk he ran of losing his life by the most terrible torments, if he became a Christian, and if he believed he would have the fortitude not to forsake Christ when suffering martyrdom. Romanus assured him that he was ready to bear anything, and that no danger, nor the most painful death would change him. St. Lawrence then instructed him, as well as he could in the short time left them, baptized him and exhorted him to be firm. Romanus promised to do so, and faithfully kept his word. It was impossible for him to hide the joy he felt in being ranked among the number of the Christians; his heart was full to overflowing, and he was constantly betraying himself and letting it be clearly seen that he had joined the faithful. The Emperor, on hearing of it, was greatly provoked, as he saw that, by torturing the Christians, he really increased their number instead of lessening them. When Romanus was brought before him, he intended to ask him how far the report of his conversion was true; but the young man, on entering the emperor's presence, immediately cried out: "I am a Christian! I am a Christian!" This voluntary confession enraged the emperor still more, and he, at once, gave the order, first to scourge the valiant young man, and then behead him. The order was executed. Romanus praised God while he was scourged most cruelly, and cried aloud: "I am a Christian, I am a Christian, and I esteem myself the happiest man on earth, that I am deemed worthy to give my blood in honor of my Saviour, who died so painful a death for me." After his entire body had been torn by the scourges, he, like a valiant soldier of Christ, ended his life by the sword, on the 9th of August, 258.



To-day, also, St. Secundianus, St. Marcellianus and St. Varianus, three noble Romans, ended their lives by a glorious martyrdom. The first of these, Secundianus, who enjoyed a

great reputation in Rome, on account of his learning and eloquence, was, while in the darkness of heathenism in which he was born, a valuable assistant to the Emperor Valerian, in persecuting the Christians. Observing their constancy in their faith and their willingness to suffer for it, he began to consider whence came this fidelity and endurance in suffering. Whilst he was pondering on this, Marcellianus, his most intimate friend, a heathen like himself, came to see him, and Secundianus without hesitation confided to him the subject of his reflections. Marcellianus said, that he would explain what seemed to be so incomprehensible. "This silly people, said he, believe that, after this life, a much better one awaits them, which they will surely attain if they shed their blood for love of their Christ; while they believe that we shall be eternally lost. Hence, none of them can possibly be persuaded to worship our gods, and all remain obstinately true to their faith." "If this be their belief," said Secundianus, "they are not silly, but right, rather to let themselves be tortured and killed, than abandon their faith." During this discourse Varianus, a friend of both, entered. Having listened to their remarks, he said: "I believe that something invisible and supernatural sustains these Christians, as what we daily witness is more than human. Therefore, I propose that we should think over the matter carefully, and have these teachings of Christ explained to us, that we may be better able to resolve what to do." Marcellianus and Secundianus agreeing to this proposal, they invited a Christian priest, named Timotheus, to come and expound the Gospel to them. He came, and soon convinced them of the truth of his words, so that they all three received baptism in the church of Christ. Their conduct, after this sacred act, became so edifying and pure, that it was noticed by the heathens themselves, who soon suspected that they had forsaken their gods and joined the Christians. Valerian being informed of this, called Secundianus, who came into his presence, accompanied by Marcellianus and Varianus. "What has come to my ears?" said Valerian. "Can it be possible that you have allowed yourselves to be seduced by the idle fancies of the Christians and have adopted their doctrines?" "Yes, I am a Christian," replied Secundianus; "and the belief in Christ is no idle fancy, but sound and indisputable truth. The faith which we formerly followed, was a tissue of fables; and we are unspeakably grateful to God that He has deigned to enlighten us." Valerian, unwilling to dispute with the three fearless confessors of Christ, ordered the prefect Promotus either to force them to sacrifice to the gods or execute them in any manner he thought best. Promotus had all three cast into

prison, and soon after, holding court in the open market-place, he ordered them into his presence. When they arrived before him, he commanded them to sacrifice to the god Saturn; but the three holy men refusing to do this, declared they could worship but the one, true God of Heaven. Enraged at this, the prefect ordered their clothes to be torn off, and their bodies to be so inhumanly beaten with clubs, torn with iron hooks, and burnt with torches, that the executioners themselves were horrified at the cruelty and refused to continue the torments. During this martyrdom, it was observed that they were as fearless and joyful as other Christians had been, who had gone before them. They praised God and were never weary of declaring that, for love of Christ, they were willing to suffer still more. Valerian, infuriated at their constancy, and ashamed of being defied so long before the people, ordered them to be dragged out of the city and beheaded. This happened in the 253d year of the Christian Era.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Romanus praised the Almighty aloud while he was scourged; so did the martyrs, Secundianus, Marcellianus and Varianus. You promised yesterday, always to praise the Lord, in evil as well as in good days. That you may more easily do so, you must know that we can praise God in two different ways; by words and by deeds. God is praised by prayers, by calling upon Him, by sacred songs, by pious discourses. By deeds we praise God; when we perform good works in His honor; and practice patience and other virtues; when we obey Him and His Holy church, and avoid whatever is displeasing to His Majesty. We cannot at all times praise the Lord in the former of these two ways, because each of us has duties to perform which prevent it; but we can and should praise Him in the latter. The first alone would be insufficient; the second is necessary. "Not only by your words should you praise the Lord, but also by deeds," says St. Augustine. "Cease not to live piously,

and thou wilt always praise the Lord," says the same great teacher. How have you hitherto praised the Lord? How will you praise Him henceforth?

II. "I am a Christian, and I esteem myself the happiest man on earth," said St. Romanus. To be a Christian is, in truth, a great happiness; in fact a much greater happiness than to be the mightiest monarch on earth, without the true faith; for he who is a true Christian, is a child of God, a brother of Jesus Christ, an heir to Heaven. "I am a Christian," says St. Bernard, "a brother of Christ." If I am indeed what I am called, then I am joint-heir with Christ, heir of God." But can you say truthfully: "I am a Christian?" Others call you so, I know. But are you in reality what you are called? Does your conduct harmonize with the name of Christian? If your life is not that of a child of God, of a brother of Christ, do not say you are a Christian. A child of the Almighty, a brother of the Saviour should most highly ap-

preciate the honor he enjoys beyond thousands of others, and he should never do anything contrary to the dignity of his high station. "Recognize, O man, your dignity;" says St. Leo, "and as you have become a partaker of the Divine nature return not again, through your misconduct, to your original depravity. Recollect whose member you are, and do not forget that you have been torn away from the powers of darkness, and are placed in the kingdom of the Lord. Do not again submit to the will of Satan, as you have been redeemed by Christ's precious blood." St. Thomas of Villanova says: "To be a Christian, is to be a soldier of Christ; a disciple, a follower of the Saviour." A soldier must die; a dis-

ciple must listen with attention and pleasure to the instructions of his master, and must live in accordance with them. A follower of Christ must endeavor to imitate His virtues. Have you hitherto fulfilled this threefold obligation? Have you even as much as seriously thought about it? Let it henceforth be your aim; else renounce the name of Christian. You do not deserve it, nor does it benefit you, if you are not, in reality, a Christian. "It is of no benefit to us to bear the name of Christians, if we do not endeavor to acquire Christian virtues," says St. Cyril of Jerusalem; and St. Augustine tells us: "Be a true Christian; for, to be one in name only, is of little avail."

TENTH DAY OF AUGUST.

ST. LAWRENCE, MARTYR.

The many and high encomiums which were paid to St. Lawrence by the most ancient and illustrious of the holy Fathers of the Church, St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, St. Leo I., St. Maximus and St. Peter Chrysologus, are the surest sign that this Saint has always been considered one of the most famous martyrs who gave their blood for Christ. He was born of Christian parents, in the middle of the third century, at Osca, a city in Aragon. His father's name was Orentius, his mother's, Patientia; both are honored as Saints. Such parents gave a holy education to their son. He early evinced, on all occasions, an especial love for God, a fearless constancy in the true faith, and a watchful care over the preservation of his purity. While yet young in years, he went to Rome, and won, by his blameless life, the highest regard of all who came in contact with him. Pope Xystus or Sixtus ordained him deacon. His functions were to serve the Pope at the altar, to take charge of the treasures of the church, and to distribute the revenues which were destined for the maintenance of the sextons and the poor.

A terrible persecution of the Christians took place at the period of which we speak. Pope Sixtus was seized and thrown into the Mamertine prison. Lawrence seeing him, from a distance, dragged along, ran towards him and bitterly weeping, said: "Father, whither are you going without your son? Holy Pontiff, whither are you hastening without your deacon? You have never been wont to offer the holy sacrifice without me, your servant. In what have I displeased you, O my Father? Have you found me unworthy of you and of your sacred service? Prove me now, and see if you have chosen a fit servant in trusting me with the dispensing of the blood of Christ!" This and more said the Saint, desiring to suffer with St. Sixtus for the Lord's sake. The holy Pope replied: "I do not leave you, my son; but you will have to suffer a great trial. We being old, have not much to endure; but you, strong in your youth, must gain a more glorious victory over the tyrant. Do not weep. In three days, you will follow me. Go now and take care of the treasures of the church that are in your keeping." Lawrence, comforted by the prophecy of the holy Pope, went immediately and secured the sacred vessels of the altar and the vestments of the priests, distributed among the poor the money which had been collected for them, visited the Christians assembled in different houses and subterranean vaults, exhorted all to constancy, and employed the whole night in deeds of charity and humility. The following day, when the Pope was being led away to execution, the holy Levite approached him again, saying: "Holy Father, do not leave me; for, the treasures which you committed to my care, are all distributed." The Pope comforted the Saint as he had done the day before, and was led away and ended his life by the sword.

Meanwhile, some of the soldiers, having heard Lawrence speak of treasures, informed the emperor Valerian of the fact, and that tyrant, as avaricious as he was cruel, had Lawrence apprehended, and gave him in charge of Hippolytus, an officer, who placed him in a prison where several malefactors were kept. One of these, Lucilius, had wept so much during his imprisonment, that he had become blind. St. Lawrence, pitying him, advised him to embrace the Christian faith and be baptized, as by that, his sight would be restored. Lucilius followed his advice, and soon after baptism, his sight returned. Hippolytus, touched by the grace of God at this miracle, was converted with his whole household. The next day, the emperor commanded that Lawrence should be brought to him. The valiant confessor of Christ rejoiced at this message and said to Hippolytus: "Let us go; for two glorious crowns are prepared for you and me.

The emperor asked him who he was, whence he came and where he had concealed the treasures of the church. The first and second questions Lawrence fearlessly answered, saying: "I am a Christian, born in Spain." To the third he made answer, that if the emperor would allow him a little time, he would gather the treasures and show them to him. Delighted at this, the emperor willingly granted him the desired time, but ordered Hippolytus not to leave his side for a moment, lest he should escape. The Saint assembled all the poor he could find, and leading them to the tyrant, said: "Behold, these are the treasures of our church." The emperor, regarding this as an insult, was greatly enraged, and swore by the gods to be revenged. He gave Lawrence over to the prefect with the command to torture him in the most painful manner if he refused to worship the idols. The prefect, who was as cruel as the emperor himself, ordered his lictors to tear off the Saint's clothes and to lash him, like a vile slave, till his whole body was a mass of blood and wounds. After this, he displayed a great many instruments of torture, with the menace that they would be used upon him, if he longer refused to worship the gods. Lawrence looked unconcernedly upon them, and said: "They cannot frighten me. I have long desired to suffer for the sake of Christ. Your idols are not worthy to be worshipped; they are no gods, and I will never sacrifice to them." Hardly had these words passed his lips, when the holy man was stretched upon the rack, then raised high in the air and his whole body whipped with scourges on the ends of which were fastened iron stars or spurs. After this, they applied lighted torches to his mangled body. The martyr's constancy could not be shaken. Turning his eyes heavenward, he only asked for strength to endure. The prefect, astonished at this heroism, ascribed it to magic, and threatened him with still greater torment. The Saint, full of courage, replied: "Do with me as you like. Sheltering myself beneath the name of Jesus, I do not fear pain. It does not last long." The tyrant caused him to be beaten, a third time, with such cruelty, that the Saint himself thought he would die. He cried to God: "Take my soul, O Lord, and release it from mortality." But a voice from Heaven was heard saying: "A still more glorious victory awaits thee." The people were awestruck at this, but the tyrant said: "Do you hear, Romans, how the demons console this godless man? We, however, will see who is to conquer." The Saint was scourged again, and it was then that Romanus saw an angel, who consoled the Saint and wiped the perspiration from his brow and the blood from his wounds, by which miracle he was converted. The executioners were tired of

torturing, but the Saint was not tired of suffering. Joy and peace beamed from his countenance. The tyrant threatened to torture him through the whole night, if he would not sacrifice to the gods. But the Saint replied: "No night can be more agreeable to me, than the one with which you threaten me. I will never sacrifice to your false gods." At this answer they beat the Saint's mouth with stones, and carried him back to prison.

During the night, the prefect endeavored to devise some new way in which he might most cruelly torture Lawrence on the following day, and at last resolved upon roasting him alive. Early on the next day, he ordered the executioners to make an iron bed in the form of a gridiron, put live coals under it, stretch and bind the Saint upon it, and slowly roast him. The command was fulfilled to the great horror of all present. The Saint, however, lay as quietly on the red hot gridiron as if it had been a bed of roses, only saying at intervals: "Receive, O Lord, this burnt-offering as an agreeable fragrance." His countenance beamed with heavenly joy, and the Christians, who were present, said that a divine light had surrounded him and his body exhaled a sweet odor. After having been burned thus a long time, he turned his eyes towards the prefect and said: "I am sufficiently roasted on one side; turn me over and eat my flesh." How the tyrant received these words can easily be imagined. The Saint, however, continued to be cheerful and filled with divine consolation. He praised God and thanked Him for the grace vouchsafed him to die for his faith. At last, with his eyes raised to Heaven, he gave his heroic soul into the hands of his Redeemer, on the 10th of August, 258. Many of the heathens, who were present, were converted by this glorious martyrdom to the Faith of Christ.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The life of the great Christian hero, Lawrence, contains an indisputable proof that the Holy Mass was said as early as the first centuries of the Christian Era, and was considered the true sacrifice of the New Testament; for, St. Lawrence said, that when St. Sixtus officiated as priest, he served him as deacon. How then, dare the non-Catholics regard this holy sacrifice as a superstitious act, when they themselves allow that the Catholic Church, in the first four hundred years after Christ, was the true church? Catholic Christian, let nothing shake your faith. You are assured that in the holy Mass, He, who once offered Himself on the cross to His heavenly Father, as a victim for all men, is offered again daily as an unbloody sacrifice. But as you truly believe this, manifest your faith by frequently and devoutly assisting at

this holy sacrifice. If you have the opportunity, let no day pass without it ; for the words of St. Lawrence Justinian are true, who says : " There is no sacrifice more excellent or more agreeable to the Majesty of God, none more beneficial to ourselves, than this. "

II. " Sheltered under the name of Jesus Christ, I do not fear these pains, " said St. Lawrence to the tyrant, " for they do not last long. " And it was so. The torments which he suffered, though terrible, were of short duration ; but even had they lasted months or years, they would have come to an end, and that which finally ends, we may truthfully say, is short. " All that ends with time, " says St. Augustine, " is short. " Quite different is it with those pains, with which the Almighty punishes sin in hell.

They are terrible, they last eternally, and never end. Hundreds of thousands of years will pass, and yet these pains never end. " The worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished, " says the Lord Himself. (Mark, ix.) When you have to suffer, think of those long and dreadful pains, and you will certainly never complain of the weight or duration of your trials, but will be encouraged to bear them all patiently. Think that what you suffer is short, soon ended ; while the torments of hell never end. What, therefore, must we do to escape those terrible pains ? If we should even be roasted on a red-hot gridiron, like St. Lawrence, to escape hell, we should gladly accept it. St. Augustine says : " Who would not gladly burn one hour with St. Lawrence, to escape the fire of hell ? "

ELEVENTH DAY OF AUGUST.

ST. TIBURTIUS AND ST. SUSANNA, MARTYRS.

Tiburtius, a son of the Roman prefect Chromatius, received holy baptism at the same time as his father, and not only endeavored to lead a Christian life, but also to bring others to the knowledge of the true faith. One day, while he was walking through the street, a boy fell from the roof of a house to the pavement, and was so injured that it was thought that every moment would be his last. Tiburtius going towards him, made the sign of the cross over him, and commanded him, in the name of Jesus Christ, to rise, and to abandon heathenism. The boy immediately arose, became a Christian, and persuaded many who had witnessed the miracle to do likewise. At another time Tiburtius went to a youth named Torquatus, who, although baptized and calling himself a Christian, did not conduct himself according to the dictates of the church. His dress was too luxurious ; he spent too much time in idleness, gaming, dancing, and other amusements ; he was unrestrained and licentious in his conversation and conduct. He was seldom at prayer, but

frequently in dangerous company. Tiburtius exhorted him most earnestly to change his unchristian behavior. Torquatus feigned a determination to follow his advice, but secretly went to the judge Fabian, and revealed to him that Tiburtius was a Christian. This he did in revenge for the reproofs which Tiburtius had given him. But, that he might not be known as the accuser, he requested to be arraigned with Tiburtius. When this had taken place, the judge asked Torquatus who he was. "I am a Christian," was his reply, "and this man Tiburtius has converted me to the true faith." But Tiburtius said: "I have never recognized you as a Christian; for, your life has not been that of a Christian. To dress luxuriously, not to observe the fast days, to be indifferent to your prayers, to pass the day in idleness, to associate with the other sex, to be licentious in your words, are not the characteristics of a Christian. Christ does not recognize such as His followers." Fabian would not listen to these reproofs, but, having the ground strewn with hot coals, he said to the saint: "You have your choice either to throw incense over these coals, and thus offer to the gods, or to walk barefoot over them." Tiburtius, without a moment's hesitation, took off his shoes, and courageously stepping upon the coals, walked up and down over them, without a sign of pain. Addressing the judge, he said: "See and know, that the God of the Christians is the only God, whom all creatures obey. Your live coals seem to me but lovely flowers." The judge, highly incensed, exclaimed: "I knew long since that your Christ instructed his followers in magic. I shall, however, pay no attention to it." The holy martyr rebuked this blasphemy, and as Fabian saw that the heathens began to admire the God of the Christians, he ordered him to be beheaded, thus bestowing upon him the crown of martyrdom.



St. Susanna, one of the most noble virgins of Rome, and a near relative of the emperor Dioclesian, was educated by her father, Gabinus, and Pope Cajus in the Christian faith from her earliest infancy. As soon as she was old enough to understand the value of chastity, she vowed never to choose another bridegroom than Jesus Christ. It was not unknown to Dioclesian that Gabinus and his brother Cajus were Christians, but being so nearly related to them, he feigned ignorance of the fact. After having chosen Maximian Galerius as his colleague and heir to the imperial throne, he intended to give him Susanna in marriage, and thus make her empress. To inform Gabinus of

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this intention, he sent his sister's son, Claudius, to him. Gabinus begged for time to consider the proposal, and repaired immediately to Pope Cajus to consult with him. Both informed the chaste Susanna of the emperor's intention, and asked her how she wished to act in this important affair. "The Christian faith," replied she, without hesitation, "and virginal chastity possess a higher value for me than a crown. I will not become the spouse of one who is not a Christian; besides, I have promised myself to God, and neither honor, riches, nor any other earthly advantage shall induce me to break my vow." Cajus and Gabinus were rejoiced at this answer, and encouraged her to constancy, and advised her to prepare herself, by prayer, fasting, and other good works, for a hard struggle, as there was reason to believe that it would cost her life, if she dared to resist the emperor's will. "And what could be a greater honor to me," she said, "than to obtain, instead of the crown of the empire, the glorious crown of martyrdom?" Three days later, Claudius returned to Gabinus for the answer. On entering the house, he saw Susanna herself, and approaching her, offered, as a mark of respect, to kiss her hand. But the virgin, filled with holy indignation, withdrew her hand, saying severely: "I have never, from my childhood, allowed any man such a liberty, still less shall I permit you to take it; for, you are an idolater, and your lips are soiled from the sacrifice of which you have partaken." She then spoke to him so earnestly of her faith, that Claudius, unable to say a word, for some moments stood silently before her; but at last, impressed by her words and manner, and persuaded by an inner voice, he resolved, with his wife and children, to embrace the Christian faith. Another courtier, Maximus, who had followed Claudius to receive Gabinus' answer, acted in the same manner. The emperor, hearing of it, was enraged, and ordering Claudius, his wife and children, and Maximus, with his family, to be seized, he caused them to be burned alive, while Susanna and her father were cast into a dungeon. A few days later, he released Susanna, and placed her in the charge of Serena, his wife, who was to endeavor to persuade her to become the wife of Maximian. Serena, however, who was secretly a Christian, strengthened Susanna in her resolution, and exhorted her to spurn riches, honors, and the imperial crown, rather than break her promise to God.

At last, Serena imparted Susanna's unchangeable resolution to the emperor, who, contrary to all expectations, sent her back to her father's house, leaving it to Maximian to plead his own cause. He stormed her father's house at night, determined by force to rob her of her most precious treasure. But when he

opened the door, he saw her absorbed in prayer, and surrounded by a heavenly light. Awed by the sight, he drew back and went to Dioclesian and related all he had seen. The emperor then commanded Macedonius, an apostate from the faith, either to force her to worship the gods or to kill her. Macedonius, who could prevail upon her neither with promises nor menaces, had Susanna cruelly scourged and then beheaded in her own house. During her martyrdom, she gave thanks to God that He had thought her worthy to suffer and die for His sake.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Tiburtius did not count Torquatus among the Christians, because he did not lead a Christian life. To dress indecently or too luxuriously, not to observe the fasts, to be indifferent to prayer, to idle away time, to associate too freely with the other sex, to hold loose conversations, are not the characteristics of a Christian. Thus did the holy martyr judge. Consider your life, and see that you may be counted among the true Christians, and not among those whom Christ does not recognize as His disciples, and to whom He will one day say: "I know you not." (Matt. xxv.) If you find that you resemble Torquatus, reform, or no longer call yourself a Christian. If you are called a Christian and are not one; if you are regarded as a Christian and lead not a Christian life, what does it profit you? "A holy name without holy conduct, avails nothing," says St. Salvianus. The holy faith and the holy doctrines of Christianity do not profit you, if you do not regulate your life by them. The very fact of calling yourself a Christian, makes your responsibilities before God so much the greater, and your punishment the heavier if you do not lead a Christian life, but precipitate yourself into sin and vice; for then you belong to those of whom the Apostle writes: "For the name of God is blasphemed through you

among the Gentiles." (Rom. ii.) Origen explains this as follows: "Not only does he who speaks against God, blaspheme God and cause others to do so, but he who, under the name of Christian, lives a wicked life and causes others to sin, blasphemes the Almighty." It is unanimously taught by all the Fathers of the church that the iniquities of Christians are much greater, and therefore, far more deserving of punishment than those of the infidels. "If we, as Catholic Christians, lead a life of iniquity like the heathen, the sin we commit is much greater than theirs," says St. Salvianus. The pious Carthusian, Dionysius, says: "The condemnation of the faithful is much more dreadful than that of the infidel; as our sins are greater in proportion to the graces we receive to avoid them."

II. What examples of virtue are contained in the life of St. Susanna! She esteemed the true faith so highly, that she refused an imperial crown, fearing to endanger her soul by accepting the hand of a heathen emperor. How wrong those Catholics are who, in the hope of bettering their circumstances, or moved by senseless love, unite themselves with those who are not Catholics, and thus place themselves in danger of losing the true faith for themselves and for their children. Susanna chose to retain her chastity rather

than by forfeiting it, to become empress. How unwise are they who exchange this priceless treasure for money or for a short sensual pleasure! Susanna assured Claudius that she had never allowed a man even to kiss her hand. Happy they who can truthfully say the same! Thousands would not now be suffering in hell, if they could have made the same assertion. But as in the beginning, perhaps only through thoughtlessness, they did not refuse a kiss, they were gradually carried so far as to commit

the most heinous sins. If you would preserve your chastity, you must not only avoid everything that would disgrace you in the eyes of the world, but everything which may lead you to sin, however slight it may appear to you. Consider this well and take it to heart. Do not believe those who tell you the contrary, for the father of lies speaks through their lips. "If we neglect small faults," writes St. Gregory, "we slowly but surely prepare the way to great crimes."

TWELFTH DAY OF AUGUST.

ST. CLARE, VIRGIN AND ABBESS.

St. Clare, foundress of the Order which bears her name, was born of rich and pious parents, at Assisi, in the district of Umbria, in Italy. She received the name of Clare, which means clear or bright, for the following reason. While her mother Hortulana, was kneeling before a crucifix, praying that God might aid her in her hour of delivery, she heard the words: "Do not fear. You will give birth to a light which shall illumine the whole world." From her earliest childhood, prayer was Clare's only delight. She gave to the poor all the presents which she received from her parents. She despised all costly garments, all worldly pleasures. Beneath the fine clothes she was obliged to wear, she wore a rough hair-girdle. She partook of so little food, that it seemed as if she wished to observe a continual fast. During this same period lived St. Francis, surnamed "the Seraphic," on account of his great virtues. Clare frequently went to him and confided to him her desire to renounce the world and to consecrate her virginity to God, and to lead a perfect life in the most abject poverty. St. Francis who saw, that besides other gifts and graces, she was filled with the most ardent love of God, possessing great innocence of heart and despising the world, strengthened her in her holy desire, while at the same time he tested her constancy. Being sufficiently convinced that her desires were inspired by Heaven, he advised Clare to leave her home, which she did on Palm Sun-

day, going to the church of the Portiuncula, where she had her hair cut off, as a sign that she would enter a religious life. She divested herself of all feminine ornaments, and attired in a penitential garb, tied around her with a cord, she was placed by St. Francis in a vacant Benedictine convent. She was at that time just eighteen years of age. When her parents heard of what she had done, they hastened to the Convent, to take Clare home, declaring that this choice of a state of life was only a childish whim, or that she had been persuaded to it by others. Clare, however, after opposing their arguments, fled into the church, and clinging to the altar with one hand, with the other she bared her head shorn of its hair, exclaiming: "Know all, that I desire no other bridegroom than Jesus Christ. Understanding well what I was doing, I chose Him and I will never leave Him." Astonished at this answer, all returned home, admiring her virtue and piety. Clare thanked God for this victory and was, on account of it, all the more strengthened in her resolution. She had a sister younger than herself, named Agnes. A few days later she, too, fled from her parents' roof and going to Clare, wished to be invested in the same habit and to serve God in the same manner. St. Clare received her joyfully, but as all her relatives were provoked beyond measure that she, too, had entered a Convent, twelve of them went and forcibly tore her from her sister's arms. Clare took refuge in prayer, and as if inspired by the Almighty, ran after her sister, loudly calling her by name. God assisted her by a miracle. Agnes suddenly became immovable, as if rooted to the ground, and no one possessed strength enough to drag her from where she stood. Recognizing in this the powerful hand of God, they opposed her no longer, but allowed her to return to the Convent. Meanwhile, St. Francis had rebuilt the old church of St. Damian and had bought the neighboring house. Into this house he placed his first two religious daughters, Clare and Agnes, who were speedily joined by others, desirous of conforming themselves to the rule of life which St. Francis had given to Clare. This was the beginning of the Order of Poor Clares, which has since given to the world so many shining examples of virtue and holiness, to the salvation of many thousands of souls. St. Clare was appointed abbess by St. Francis, and filled the office for forty-two years with wonderful wisdom and holiness. Her mother also, together with her youngest daughter, took the habit and submitted to the government of St. Clare. The holy abbess enjoined on her order the most severe poverty, and when the Pope himself offered her some property as an endowment, she humbly but earnestly refused to accept it. She was, to all in

her charge, a bright example of poverty. In austerity towards herself she was more to be admired than imitated. The floor or a bundle of straw was her bed; a piece of wood, her pillow. Twice during the year she kept a forty days' fast on bread and water. Besides this, three days of the week, she tasted no food, and so little on the others, that it is marvellous that she could sustain life with it. The greater part of the night she spent in prayer, and her desire for mortification was so great, that St. Francis compelled her to moderate her austerities. She nursed the sick with the greatest pleasure, as in this work of charity, she found almost constant opportunity to mortify and overcome herself. Besides all her other virtues, she was especially remarkable for her devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. She sometimes remained whole hours immovable before the Tabernacle, and was often seen in ecstasy, so great was her love for the Saviour it concealed. She sought her comfort in Him alone in all her trials, amidst all her persecutions; and how great were the graces she thereby received, the following event will sufficiently illustrate.

The Saracens besieged Assisi and made preparations to scale the walls of the Convent. St. Clare, who was sick at the time, had herself carried to the gates of the convent, where, with the Ciborium, containing the Blessed Sacrament, in her hands, prostrating herself in company with all her religious, she cried aloud: "O Lord, do not give into the hands of the infidels the souls of those who acknowledge and praise Thee. Protect and preserve Thy handmaidens whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious blood." A voice was distinctly heard, saying: "I will protect you always." The result proved that this was the voice of heaven. The Saracens, seized with a sudden fear, betook themselves to flight, those who had already scaled the walls, became blind, and flung themselves down. Thus were St. Clare and her religious protected and the whole city preserved from utter devastation, by the piety and devotion of the Saint to the Blessed Sacrament.

We must omit many miracles which God wrought through His faithful servant, in order to relate her happy end. She had reached the age of sixty years, during twenty-eight of which she had suffered from various painful maladies, though she had not been confined to her bed, or rather, her bundle of straw. Her patience while suffering was remarkable, and she was never heard to complain of the severity or the duration of her sickness. The contemplation of the Passion of Christ made her own pains easy and even pleasing to her. "How short," said she one day, "seems the night to me, which I pass in the contempla-

tion of the Lord's suffering!" At another time, she exclaimed: "How can man complain when he beholds Christ hanging upon the cross and covered with blood!" Having suffered so long and with such noble resignation, she saw at last, that her end was near. She received the Blessed Sacrament, and then exhorted all her daughters not to relax in their zeal to live in poverty and holiness. When her confessor conversed with her on the merits of patience, she said: "As long as I have had the grace to serve God in the religious state, no care, no penance, no sickness has seemed hard to me. Oh, how comforting it is to suffer for the love of Christ!" The hour of her death drew near, and she saw a great many white-robed virgins come to meet her, among whom was one who surpassed all the rest in beauty. She followed them and they led her to see the Almighty face to face. Several who had read in the depths of her heart, said that she died more from the fervor of her love for God than from the effects of her sickness. Her holy death took place in 1253. The great number of miracles wrought after her death through her intercession, and the heroic virtues which made her so remarkable, induced Pope Alexander IV., only two years later, to place her in the number of Saints.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. "How can man complain when he beholds Christ hanging on the cross and covered with blood," asked St. Clare; and she also said that those nights in which she contemplated the passion of Our Lord, seemed short. During her long and painful maladies, she meditated on all the sufferings which Our Lord endured to save us, and by this means, learned such resignation that she not only had no thought of murmuring against Divine Providence, but also bore her pains with great interior consolation. See your crucified Saviour and think: "What is my suffering compared to that which my Redeemer endured for love of me? My Jesus has suffered with patience, with joy, and even with the desire to suffer still more. Why then should I be impatient and faint-hearted." With such thoughts you should animate yourself, espe-

cially during the night, as it is generally then that pains increase. Remember the night, the bitter night, which your Saviour passed in the house of Caiaphas, maltreated in every possible manner, and pray for grace, to bear the cross laid upon you, with patience and fortitude. Only try it once and you will find great relief. St. Gregory said rightly: "Remembering the sufferings of Christ, we can bear everything patiently, how heavy soever it may be."

II. St. Clare, besides her love for her crucified Lord, had an especial devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. To it she went with all her cares, and found strength and comfort. Why do you not do the same? If you had lived at the time when Christ was visible on earth and had known that He was truly the Saviour, would you not have gone

to Him, full of faith and confidence, with all your troubles, and asked Him for the graces you needed? Why are you not doing so now? Is He who is present in our churches under the form of bread, not the same who in times gone by, cured the sick and allowed no one to leave Him without consolation? Your faith teaches you that He is the same. Why then do you not go to Him with greater confidence? Why do you not look up to Him for comfort and help? You so often speak of your needs to men, who either will not or cannot help you. What does it benefit you? Ah! go to the church; lay your heart bare before your Saviour, represent to Him all your perplexities, and He will comfort

you. Especially when you are unhappy, in misfortune, in temptation, go to Him. Pray to Him in the words of St. Clare: "Lord, do not deliver to the demons the soul of one who believes in Thee. Protect and keep Thy servant whom Thou hast bought with Thy precious blood." Do not forget the instructions here given you. Follow the admonition of St. Paul, who says: "Let us therefore go with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid." (Heb. iv.) This throne of grace you find in the blessed Sacrament. Fly to it in all your sorrows, and you will find comfort and assistance.

THIRTEENTH DAY OF AUGUST.

ST. HIPPOLYTUS AND ST. CASSIAN, MARTYRS.

St. Hippolytus, an officer of the body-guard of the emperor Decius, had been born in the darkness of idolatry, but he had become a Christian, with all his household, in consequence of witnessing the many miracles which St. Lawrence performed while in the prison under his charge. He had also been present when the saint, lying on the red-hot gridiron, endured the most terrible tortures. At the sight of the heroism of St. Lawrence, he was filled with the desire to denounce himself a Christian, but he was prevented by St. Lawrence. But when this martyr had gloriously ended his combat, Hippolytus, with the assistance of a priest, named Justinus, buried the sacred remains with great devotion and veneration. The emperor on being informed of it, had Hippolytus seized and brought before him. He asked him if it was true that he had become a Christian? Hippolytus answered firmly: "Yes, I am a Christian, and moreover resolved to die such." The emperor, who had always highly esteemed him, endeavored, first by promises and then by menaces, to induce him to forsake Christ. As, however, all was unavailing, he caused him to be tortured. He was accordingly stretched on the ground, whipped with scourges, and beaten with clubs so

fearfully, that it was believed he could not survive. But God, by a visible miracle, prolonged his life. Keeping his eyes fixed upon Heaven, he frequently repeated: "I am a Christian, I suffer for Christ's sake." After having been tormented for a long time, he was cast into prison; and the prefect received the order to behead him. Before executing this order, however, he went to the house of Hippolytus to secure his property. Finding the entire household had become Christians, he took them beyond the gates of the city and had them beheaded. Concordia, an old and holy matron, who had been Hippolytus' nurse, was scourged until she expired, because she encouraged the others to remain firm in their faith. At last, Hippolytus was taken out of prison and fastened to the tails of two horses, and dragged by them until he was torn to pieces, and his heroic soul was in the presence of Him whom he had so fearlessly confessed.



On the same day, though at another place, St. Cassian suffered a martyrdom of unprecedented cruelty. This saint, was bishop of Brescia, but had been banished from his See on account of his faith. He intended to go to Rome and offer the Pope his services for the salvation of souls in some other place. On his way, he changed his mind, and taking up his residence at Imola, a town in Italy, he resolved to teach children to read and write, hoping that occasion would not be wanting to do good. In this apparently humble position, he was no less zealous than he had been in the administration of his diocese. He taught the children with love and gentleness, and endeavored to inspire them with respect for the Christian faith, fear and horror of sin, and love of virtue and piety. He continued in this occupation with great zeal for some years, to the great benefit of young and old, when suddenly a terrible persecution of the Christians arose. He was one of the first who were taken prisoners. The tyrant commanded him to sacrifice to the gods. The holy bishop and teacher refused, as might have been expected, and tried to convince the judge of his fearful blindness in worshipping dumb idols or making gods of godless men. The tyrant, furious at his arguments, ordered the executioners to strip him of his clothes and tie his hands behind his back, and leave him exposed to the mercy of the children whom he had taken such pains to teach. The children, who had been taught that Cassian was a magician and consequently must die a most painful death, took their sharp iron pencils with which, in those days, they wrote upon their wax tablets, and pierced him with

them till the blood ran profusely from his veins. This torture lasted long and was extremely painful. The saint, however, never complained of the ingratitude of his pupils, nor gave a sign of impatience, but praised and thanked the Lord until his soul went to Heaven to receive the crown of martyrdom.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Hippolytus turned his eyes to Heaven during his martyrdom. Many holy martyrs, in their sufferings, and many saints, in their sickness and adversity, did the same. They desired to show by it, that they bore their pains for the love of God. They also recalled to mind the recompense which they hoped to receive for their sufferings, and were encouraged by this remembrance. Do you the same in all your sorrows, cares and afflictions, and show, by it, that you will bear all for the love of God. Call on the Almighty for strength and help. Think of the great reward. By this means, you will be strengthened to endure everything with patience and even with joy. No labor, no pain, no care will be too hard for you to bear, nor last longer than you can endure, if you raise your eyes to Heaven, especially if you consider that your labor, your cares, your pains are very short in comparison to the eternal rest. "Raise your eyes upward during your work," says St. Ephrem, "and you will consider nothing hard while contemplating the Heavenly joys." "The present suffering," says St. Thomas of Villanova, is only a moment in comparison with heavenly joys. That which hurts us passes quickly,

but that which we receive as reward remains eternally."

II. St. Cassius especially endeavored to impress three moral points upon the minds of his pupils; esteem for the true faith, horror for sin, and love of virtue and piety. Oh! that all parents and teachers would try to impress these sentiments deeply upon the hearts of their children and pupils! How different our youth would be! But these points should be recommended to the consideration of those also who are past the age of youth. Whoever you are, esteem the true faith above all things; for, it is a priceless grace that the Almighty has not permitted you to be born in Judaism or idolatry, but has granted you that faith without which there is no salvation. Fear and abhor sin more than any other evil; for, it can do you more harm than any other. Sin alone can make you eternally unhappy. Love virtue and piety; for, "godliness is," according to the Apostle, "profitable to all things." (I Timoth. iv.) Without virtue we cannot go to Heaven. "Vainly does he desire to obtain the heavenly glories, who is not adorned with virtue. Virtue is the road to glory. Through virtue we attain eternal honor and joy," writes St. Bernard.

FOURTEENTH DAY OF AUGUST.

ST. EUSEBIUS, PRIEST AND MARTYR, AND ST. RADEGUNDIS, QUEEN
OF FRANCE.

St. Eusebius, a Roman, born of Christian parents, lived at the time of the Arian emperor Constantius. As the latter persecuted the Catholics as cruelly as the former heathen emperors had done, Eusebius endeavored to encourage the Catholics to adhere to their faith, and to guard them against the prevailing heresy. No sooner had the emperor heard of this, than Eusebius was seized and taken into the imperial palace, and placed within two walls, so that he could neither turn nor sit down, but was obliged to remain in a standing position. He daily received sufficient food to keep him alive, that he might be in torture so much the longer. How dreadfully the holy priest suffered from such unheard of cruelty can easily be imagined. Nothing was free but his tongue and his heart, and these were continually used for the glory of God. With his tongue he unceasingly praised his Lord, asking Him for strength, and offering to Him all that he had to endure, while his heart was filled with the most fervent love for God. This terrible imprisonment lasted for six months, and just so long this holy man continued loving and praising the Lord. In the seventh month he expired and obtained the freedom of the children of God. Two pious priests, Gregory and Orosius, found the opportunity to get possession of his blessed body, and burying it with the greatest honor, they placed upon his tomb the epitaph: "Here lieth Eusebius, the Priest, a man of God."



To this short sketch of St. Eusebius, we will add the life of St. Radegundis, although her feast was celebrated yesterday. Radegundis, the holy spouse of King Clotaire of France, was born a princess of Thuringia, but, having been made prisoner in her tenth or eleventh year, she was taken to France, as the French army had devastated her home. Her beauty and other remarkable gifts, which, at that tender age, already gave great promise for the future, interested King Clotaire in her and induced him to give her an education suitable to her rank. Rade-

gundis made great progress in all feminine arts, but still greater in the wisdom necessary to salvation, which she learned from devout books, the reading of which gave her the greatest pleasure. Besides her angelic modesty, her fervor in prayer, her love for the poor, and her other virtues, she had already begun, at that time, to mortify her tender body by abstaining from all delicacies, by rigorous fasts and other penances. She esteemed virginal chastity more than the crown, and when she afterwards heard that the king intended to take her as his wife, she endeavored to save herself by flight. Being brought back, she was obliged to yield to his wishes, but made the resolution to serve God most zealously and to labor for the salvation of her soul in the exalted station in which she was placed against her desire. She kept her word. The splendors of royalty could neither blind her, nor make her depart, in the least, from the path of virtue, in which she had always walked. She had her appointed time for prayers, devout reading and other pious exercises; she was extremely kind and tender towards the poor and sick, but very severe towards herself. Beneath her royal garments she wore a rough penitential robe. Even when sitting at a most sumptuously spread table, she always took the plainest food, and very little of it, but was careful to hide this abstinence from all present. She kept Lent more strictly than any religious in a convent, and on fast days ate only of one dish, and this either at noon or in the evening. Clotaire was at first greatly pleased with the virtuous conduct of his queen, but afterwards blamed her for it, at the instigation of those to whose licentiousness the queen's piety was a constant reproach. They at last succeeded so well by their slanders, that the king lost his affection for her and frequently wounded her deeply by his injustice. She plainly perceived the king's growing aversion to her, and when she found that he had caused her brother to be assassinated, she begged his permission to leave the court and retire into a convent. She readily obtained leave, and full of joy went to St. Medard, bishop of Noyon, whom she acquainted with her intention. She then made a pilgrimage to the tomb of St. Martin, and proceeded to Sais, an estate the king had given her, and thence Poitiers, where, with the permission of the king and of the presiding bishop, she built the Convent of the Holy Cross, one of the most famous in France. In this convent she led even a more holy life than before, and, refusing to become abbess, she bestowed this dignity on one of her former maids of honor, named Agnes, to whom she submitted in perfect obedience as one of the last of the community. The most menial and tiresome work, she begged as a favor, might be reserved for her, and hence allowed no one else to sweep the house

or serve the sick, but executed all such work with untiring energy. Towards herself she was more severe than ever. Her whole sustenance was bread and water and roots, and her bed a rush-mat spread over boards. She seldom slept more than two hours. Besides the rough-hair garments, which she never laid aside, she wore a sharp-pointed girdle, which at last grew into her flesh and had to be cut out, causing great pain. All this did not satisfy her desire to suffer, which the sight of her crucified Saviour augmented more and more. She once pressed on her bare breast an iron crucifix, which had been made red-hot. She often wished she might be tortured like the holy martyrs and envied them their happiness in being able so effectually to prove their love for Christ. While the holy queen practised these and other virtues, the former affection for his wife returned to the heart of the king. He regretted having given her leave to go to the convent, and he resolved to take her back to the court. For this purpose, he made a pilgrimage to the tomb of St. Martin, with the intention of going to Poitiers, and carrying the queen back with him, before informing her of his design. God decreed, however, that she should be apprised of his coming. She most fervently prayed that the Almighty would prevent the loss of the holy peace she enjoyed, by her returning to the dangers of the world. Offering renewed penances to heaven for this end, she also requested many other servants and handmaids of the Lord to pray for her. Her prayers were heard; the king, persuaded by St. Germanus, bishop of Paris, changed his mind and allowed Radegundis to remain undisturbed in the convent. For this mercy she gave humble thanks to God, and continued to serve Him until her 66th year.

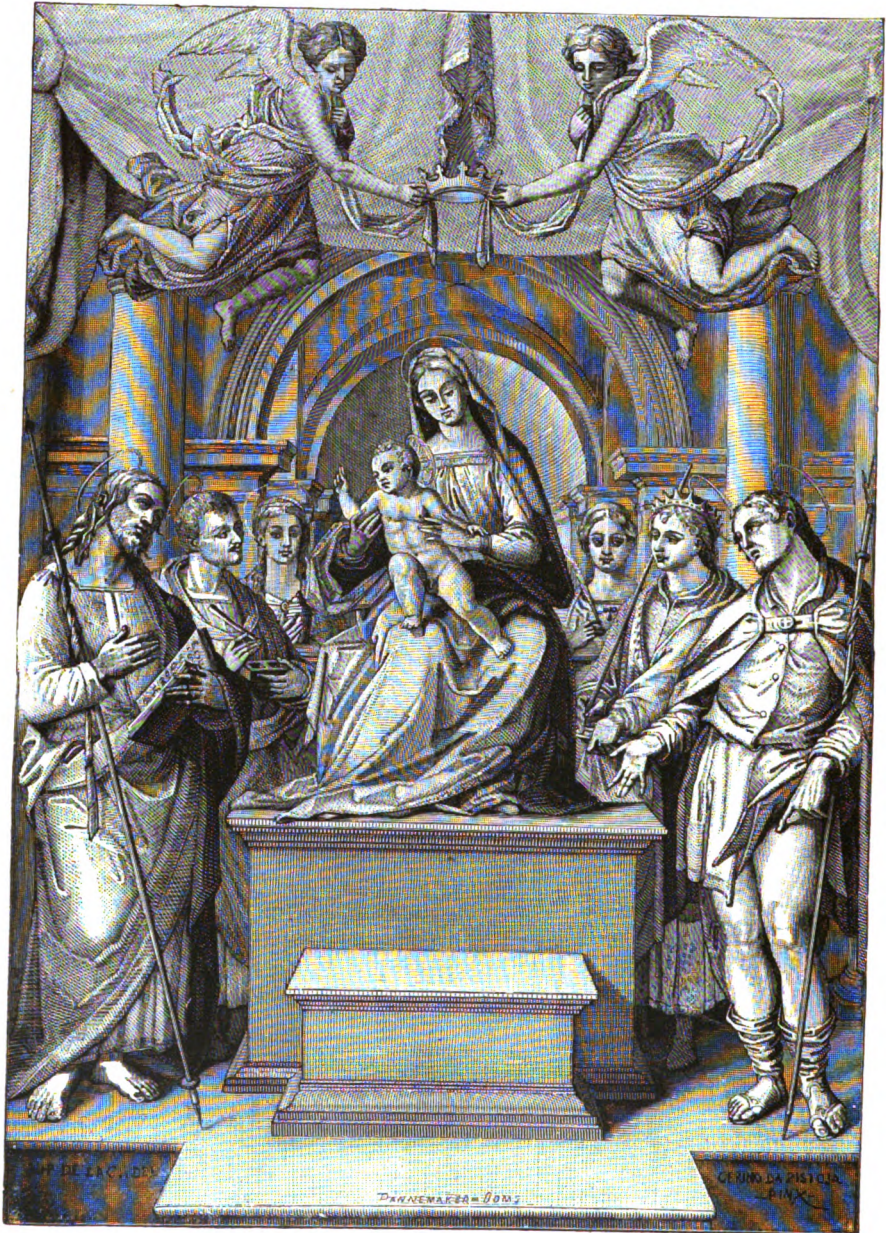
Our Lord Himself announced her approaching death to her, in a vision, and the joy she felt was seen in her countenance. She desired to be strengthened with the Sacraments, and received them with deep humility, reverence, and love. Taking her crucifix in her hand, and fixing her eyes upon it, she poured forth sighs of devotion, until her soul took its flight to Heaven, in the year of Our Lord, 587, on the 13th of August. St. Gregory of Tours, to whom the great virtues of this holy queen were known, performed the funeral rites with great solemnity. Her holy body, with other sacred relics, was burnt by the heretics, in 1562, after God had, for many centuries, honored her tomb with many miracles.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. What do you think of the epitaph of St. Eusebius? "Here lies a Man of God." St. Paul calls his holy disciple, Timothy, a man of God, when he writes: "But thou, O Man of God, fly these things, and pursue justice, godliness, faith, charity, patience, mildness," etc. (1 Timoth. vi.) Can you be called so? A man of God, properly speaking, is not one who because created by God, and owing all his possessions to God, belongs to God; for, if that were the case, every heathen, Jew, Turk and heretic could claim this title of honor; no, it belongs only to him who lives according to the laws and the will of the Almighty; who serves God zealously and with constancy; who performs all his actions for the honor of God, and not only does not voluntarily offend Him, but does all in his power to prevent others from doing so; who seeks the honor of God, and is zealous to increase the glory of His Divine Name. The Almighty Himself says of David, who is also called, in Holy Writ, the man of God: "I have found David, a son of Jesse, a man after my own heart, who will fulfil all my commandments." (2 Paralip. 8.) "Whoever is pious," writes the holy bishop Ignatius, "is a Man of God; but whoever is godless, is a man of the devil, not by nature, but by his own free will." Now, examine yourself and see whether you are a child of God or of the devil; and try henceforth to live according to the will of

God, and not according to the will and inspirations of the devil, in order that you may, from this hour, be called a "man of God."

II The life of the holy Queen Radegundis presents a wonderful example of austerity, mortification and penance. To sleep only two hours, to wear a rough penitential garment and a pointed iron girdle, to abstain from all delicate food, to observe Lent more strictly than we are obliged, to live on bread, water and undressed roots, and to practice other similar penances, are, in truth, especially in a tenderly reared princess and a great queen, acts which should cover our faces with the blush of shame. To advise you to imitate them, would, of course, be useless; but could you not, for the love of your Saviour, or out of a desire to atone for your sins, sometimes deny yourself some pleasure? Could you not shorten your sleep? Could you not sometimes refuse yourself certain food or drink? Could your body not endure some discomfort in the service of God, in the depth of winter or the heat of summer? Take courage. Try to conquer yourself. You can do much more than you think. "Practice self-denial in small things. Refuse your flesh that which it desires inordinately, and choose that which it loathes;" thus speaks St. Francis Xavier. St. Cyprian writes: "They, who thus deny themselves, force an entrance into Heaven."



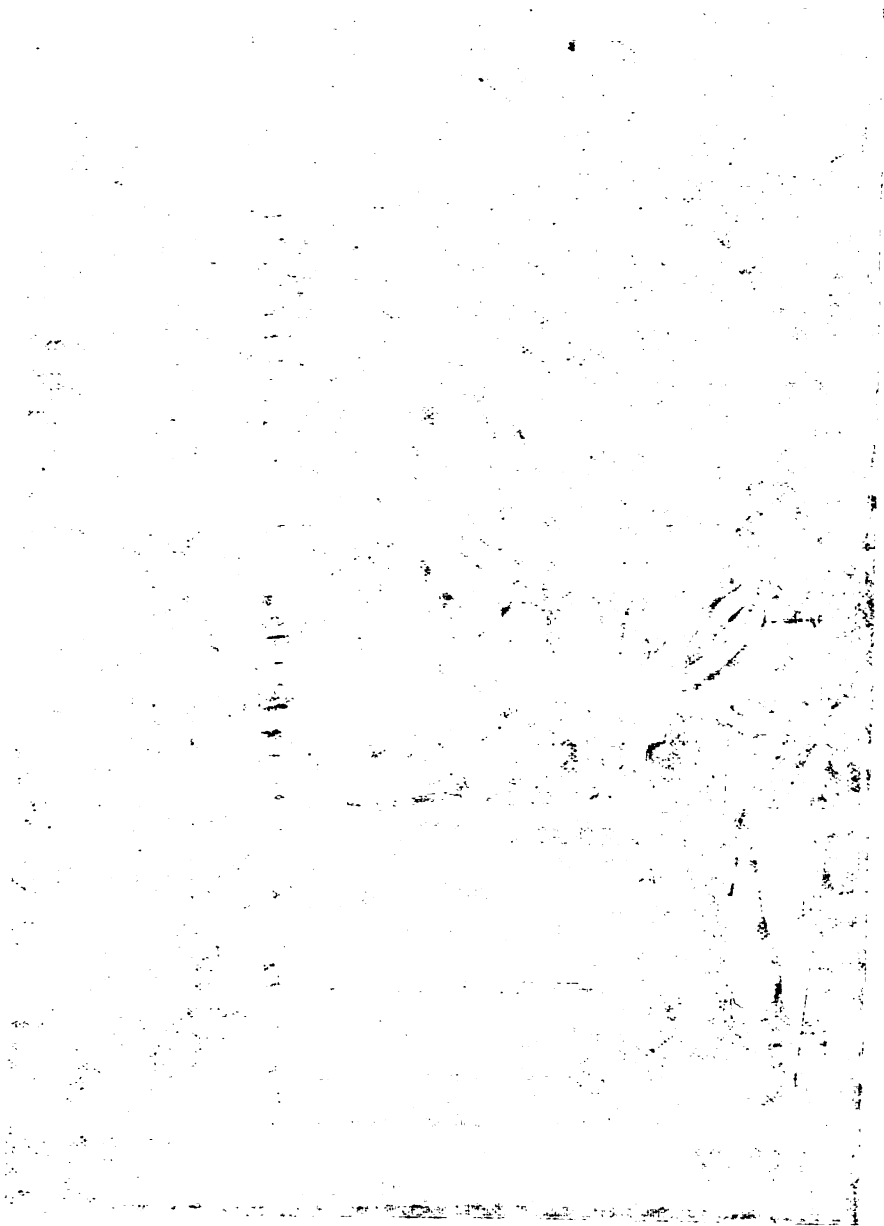
THE FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

FIFTEENTH DAY OF AUGUST

OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY INTO HEAVEN

1814

These things are to-day recalled to our remembrance, the things which were accomplished in the person of Mary, the mother of Jesus, her glorious assumption into heaven, and her glorious coronation. The Lord did not take his mother into heaven as He had taken John the Baptist, who was to remain on earth a forerunner of the Son of God, and an example of virtue to the people. He passed this time, which according to some accounts lasted twenty-three years, in the most constant meditation on the heavenly mysteries, and in remembrance of that Father who had chosen her for the salvation of mankind, and who had made her the Mother of the Christ. She was always hearing how the Faithful heard of her name, wherever among the Jews and the Gentiles, she was called away from earth to be reunited to her dear God. God had chosen her to be the first to announce to the world the day of the birth of the Son of the heart of Mary at this new age, with the day in which her soul was to go to heaven, and to be reunited to those who were related to her, and those who were gathered there, but all the apostles, excepting James the son of Alphaeus, preaching all over the world, were present at the birth of her Son that they might be there in her last moments. To all most lovingly, exhorted them to continue in the Faith, assured them of Divine assistance, and a glorious crown in heaven, and thus bade them farewell. Then she was accompanied by numberless holy spirits, departed souls of the Blessed Mother, and invited her to enter into the glory of heaven. Mary, filled with an indescribable joy, repeated the words she had so often uttered: "Be it done unto me according to Thy word;" and then gave herself into the hands of her dear Son, in a transport of heavenly love. Her dear Son, according to many authentic accounts, in the 72d, or according to others, in the 63d year of her age. How he has afflicted the apostles and other Christians, who were gathered again; but they consoled themselves by her glorious presence, and they guarded them. The glory with which she was



FIFTEENTH DAY OF AUGUST.

THE FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED MOTHER OF OUR LORD.

Three things are to-day recalled to our memory: the happy departure of Mary, the mother of Jesus, from this world, her glorious entrance into heaven, and her coronation in heaven. Christ, our Lord, did not take His mother with Him when He ascended to heaven, as He had the power to do, but preferred that she should remain on earth a few more years, to be a consolation and an example of virtue to the Christians. The holy mother passed this time, which, according to the opinion of many, lasted twenty-three years, in great holiness, occupied in prayer, meditation on the heavenly mysteries and joys; in the remembrance of all that her beloved Son had done for thirty-three years for the salvation of mankind, and in instructing and encouraging the Christians. She had the great joy of seeing and hearing how the faith in her Divine Son was spreading everywhere among the Jews and the heathens. Her desire to be called away from earth to be re-united to her Son daily increased. God at length heeded her prayer and sent an Angel to announce to her the day of her departure. O! how rejoiced was the heart of Mary at this message! When the day arrived, on which her soul was to go to heaven, not only those Christians who were related to her, and those who knew her were there, but all the apostles, excepting St. Thomas, who were preaching all over the world, were present. Mary had requested her Son that they might be there in her last hour. She spoke to all most lovingly, exhorted them to continue in their zeal, assured them of Divine assistance and of her motherly intercession in heaven, and thus bade them farewell. Then Christ Himself, accompanied by numberless holy spirits, appeared to His Blessed Mother, and invited her to enter into the glories of heaven. Mary, filled with an inexpressible joy, repeated the words she had so often uttered: "Be it done unto me according to Thy word;" and then gave her soul into the arms of her Divine Son, in a transport of heavenly love. Her death took place, according to many authentic historians, in the 72d, or according to others, in the 63d year of her age. How her loss afflicted the apostles and other Christians, may easily be imagined; but they consoled themselves by her promise to intercede for them and guard them. The glory, with which the soul

of the Blessed Virgin was received into heaven, no human tongue can describe, no human understanding comprehend ; nor the joy with which she was received, nor the veneration manifested to her by the Saints and other holy spirits.

Meanwhile, nothing was left undone by the apostles and other Christians, necessary for the burial of so pure, so holy a body as that of the Divine Mother. Kissing it most piously, they embalmed it with spices and most precious ointments, while they praised the glory of the Lord. The angels themselves, it is related by some historians, chanted, during this time, a hymn of praise, which was heard by all present. This was continued, St. Juvenalis, bishop of Jerusalem, writes, until the holy body was interred. The apostles and Christians remained at the tomb for three days, incessantly glorifying the Almighty ; and several authors of great reputation testify that the Angels continued singing their hymns of praise during all that time, near the body of their Queen. At the end of the three days, St. Thomas came, and the following event will show that it was providential that he was not there before. Inexpressibly grieved that he had not had the honor of being present at the departure of the soul of the Blessed Virgin, he begged the Apostles to open the tomb, that he might, at least, see and honor her sacred remains. The apostles did so, but found not the body, but only the linen with which it had been covered. They all concluded, enlightened from above, that the soul of the Mother of Jesus, which had, immediately on its departure from this world, gone to heaven, had, by especial divine favor, united itself again with her body, which had been thus received in the Eternal Kingdom. And it is this which is commemorated by the festival of this day.

No Christian can hesitate to believe the ascension of Mary and her reception, in soul and body, into Heaven, if he considers that the Son of God dwelt nine months in her chaste womb. It was surely not meet that her body, which had been unstained by sin, and only used in the service of the Most High, and which had been a dwelling of the Word of God, should decay and become food for worms. The Almighty has preserved the bodies of many of the Saints ; who then can suppose that He would allow the body of Mary to corrupt and become dust and ashes ? And if the body of the Blessed Virgin were still somewhere upon earth and uncorrupted, it is hardly possible to believe that God would have kept it so long concealed from the knowledge of the church ; especially as He has miraculously revealed the resting-place of the bodies of several of His Saints, who were far below the Divine Mother in dignity and holiness. Hence, the belief that the Blessed Mother entered heaven in

body and soul, is one which cannot reasonably be doubted by those who profess the Christian faith. It is equally without doubt that the Blessed Virgin was exalted to such glory as no other Saint enjoys; therefore, it is right to believe that she was crowned Queen of all Saints. On earth she was not only far beyond the Saints in the exalted position in which the Almighty placed her when He chose her as the mother of His only Son, but she also immeasurably surpassed them in grace, virtue and merit. How, then, can we think otherwise, than that she is raised far above them all in the kingdom of her Son? The just, according to Holy Writ, shall shine like stars in Heaven. How bright, then, must be the light of her, who surpassed all the just in fidelity and holiness? "If no eye hath seen, nor ear heard, nor the mind of man hath been able to conceive, what God prepares for all those who love Him," says St. Bernard, "how can we describe what was prepared for her who gave Him birth, and who loved Him above all others?" King Solomon, wishing to honor his mother, made her sit upon a throne at his right hand. How can a Christian doubt that Jesus Christ, who loved His Mother much more than Solomon loved his, would honor her in like manner? No; all the faithful recognize and honor the Divine Mother, raised as high above all the Saints in heaven, as she surpassed them in all things on earth. "The glory of the Blessed Virgin surpasses that of the other Saints," says St. Bernard, "as the light of the sun does that of the stars of heaven."

"Our greatest comfort should be that, as much as Mary is exalted above all the Saints of heaven, so she is far more solicitous about us than they are." These are the words of St. Bonaventure. St. Bernard writes, that Mary, the Blessed Virgin, was taken to heaven, to become our intercessor with her Divine Son. The same is written by other Holy Fathers, as St. Irenæus, St. Ephrem, St. Anselm, St. Gregory Nazianzen and St. John of Damascus, who all confer upon the holy Mother the title of Intercessor, and hence beg her intercession. "We all," says St. Ephrem, "prostrate ourselves before thee; we all ask thy intercession." "Why shouldst thou not come to the assistance of us sinners," says St. Anselm, "as thou hast been so highly exalted in our behalf? We recommend ourselves to thy mercy; watch over us that we may not go to destruction." The true Church also, agreeing with the holy fathers, in the Holy Mass of yesterday and to-day, testifies, that the Blessed Virgin was taken into heaven, there to pray for us. Besides, it is well known that the Church often has recourse to the Mother of God as our intercessor with the Most High, in the beautiful hymn of praise, "Salve Regina;" "Hail! holy Queen."

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

1. Mary's death was caused by her love of God. Who can be surprised at this? She had continually lived in the love of God. All that she did or suffered, she did or suffered for the love of God. How will your death be? If you live without the love of God, or if you live under the displeasure of the Almighty, you have reason to fear that you will die in His displeasure. You have been told before now that you will probably die as you have lived. "Their end will be according to their works," says the holy apostle (11 Corin. xi). And the prophet Isaias wrote, long before: "Say to the just man that it is well; for, he shall eat the fruit of his doings. Wo to the wicked unto evil; for, the reward of his hands shall be given him," (Isaias iii) that is to say, he will be punished as he deserves, according to his works. He has lived in sin; he shall die in sin and go to destruction. It is a miracle of divine mercy when anyone who has lived long in sin, dies happily. This may happen to one in a hundred. If you desire to die in the love and grace of God, endeavor to live in the love and grace of God. Keep your conscience free from sin. If you should have committed sin, either from weakness or wickedness, cleanse your soul immediately by the means which Christ has ordained, in order to be reinstated in the grace of the Almighty. Take care, also that you cultivate the love of God, as so many saints have done, in order that you may die in His love.

2. Mary was exalted in Heaven above all saints, because she had not only surpassed them in dignity, but also in merits and virtues. If you cannot surpass others in virtue and piety, endeavor, at least, to imitate them. To-day resolve to imitate the divine mother in that virtue of which we have just spoken; fervent love for God. All that you say or do, say or do it for the love of God. Mary is called the mother of beautiful love. Beautiful love is to love God for Himself and our neighbor for His sake. Mary is the mother of beautiful, divine love. As such, invoke her to-day with great confidence. Beg her to obtain for you powerful graces that you too may die with burning love for the Giver of All Life. Oh! if you were so happy as to die from intense love for God! Pray for this with especial devotion, this day and henceforth. Say in the Angelus, "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us, sinners, now and at the hour of our death, amen." The custom of saying the Angelus is very ancient and has been practised by the most zealous servants of God. The following prayer is by St. Ephrem: "Protect me now and forevermore, O, divine mother! thou mother of mercy! Save me, O holy and unspotted Virgin! from all harm and from the temptations of the Evil One. Be my intercessor at the hour of death, and guard me from the unquenchable fire. Deign, oh! most merciful mother, to receive me to contemplate the glory of thy Son."

THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE ASSUMPTION
OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

ST. JOACHIM, FATHER OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

St. Joachim, the father of the Blessed Virgin, was a native of Nazareth, a little town in Galilee. His parents, though occupying an humble position in the world, were descendants of the holy king David. It was not without inspiration that, at his circumcision, the name of Joachim was given him; it means "Preparation for the Lord," or, as others translate it, a preparation for the arrival of the Lord; and it has been understood by several teachers to signify that he would have a daughter whom he would prepare, by a holy education, to be the dwelling of the Redeemer of the world. Arriving at the years of manhood, he married Anna, a virtuous and chaste maiden of Bethlehem, whom, without doubt, God had gifted with especial graces, as she was chosen by Him to be the Mother of the Queen of Heaven. Joachim and Anna continued, after their union, to serve God with the greatest fidelity. The most perfect charity and harmony reigned in their dwelling. They had divided their possessions into three parts. The first they devoted exclusively to the honor of God and to the adornment of the temple; the second, to the poor; and the third they kept for themselves. One thing saddened the lives of Joachim and Anna. They had been married many years without being blessed with a child, and their advancing age made them despair of ever having one. Barrenness was, among their people and at their time, considered a great disgrace and a curse from Heaven, and Joachim lived under that cross for many years. He never ceased to implore God with tears, prayers and fasts, to remove it from him; but it seemed that he was not heard, which gave him great grief. He, however, never murmured against the Almighty, but, submitting to His will, continued his prayer. It is also believed, that he and his spouse made a vow, that if they were blessed with a child, they would consecrate it to His service. St. Epiphanius relates that, one day, while St. Joachim was praying, an angel appeared to him and assured him that God had heard his prayer, and that a daughter should be given him, who would become the Mother of the promised Messiah. The angel informed him also of the

* The feast of St. Joachim, which was formerly celebrated on March 20th, is now, according to a Papal decree, observed on the first Sunday after the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin.

name which God had destined for her. The joy, which filled St. Joachim when he heard this message, is beyond all description. He went immediately to tell his spouse of it, who, according to some authors, had received the same revelation. Both gave fervent thanks to the Almighty, and praised His mercy. The angel's prophecy was fulfilled, and St. Anna gave birth to a daughter, who was born free from the stain of original sin, full of the Holy Ghost, blessed above all women, and destined by Heaven to be the Mother of the only-begotten Son of God. St. Joachim, renewing his thanks to the Almighty, redoubled his zeal in His service. As soon as the time had come which the law prescribed, St. Joachim and his holy spouse carried their newborn child into the temple and offered it with great devotion to God, redeemed it again according to the custom, and returned with it to their home. Three years they kept their daughter with them, after which they brought the tender child, who was, however, gifted with the full use of mind, into the temple of Jerusalem, and having consecrated her, with the usual ceremonies, to the service of the Almighty, gave her in charge of the priests for education and instruction. In this manner St. Joachim fulfilled his vow and showed how truly he loved God. For although his love for his daughter, no doubt, surpassed the love of most parents for their children, yet he deprived himself of that which was most dear to him on earth, and consecrated it to the Most High. It cannot be doubted that God recompensed his self-sacrificing love with great graces and favors. After having made this sacrifice to the Almighty, Joachim and Anna lived for many years in great sanctity.

It is believed that St. Joachim expired in the eightieth year of his age; but proofs of this are wanting. His death, however, whenever it may have pleased the Almighty to call him, must have been precious in the sight of God, as so holy a life had preceded it. It is also certain that the glory of St. Joachim in Heaven and his intercession with God are proportioned to his merit and dignity in having been chosen to be the father of the Mother of God, and therefore, the grandfather of Jesus Christ. They who, in need and sorrow, invoke him with confidence, will surely find that he is ever ready to carry the petitions of the faithful to the throne of the Most High.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

1. St. Joachim lived with his holy spouse, St. Ann, in continual love and harmony; they made use of their worldly possessions to honor God, decorate the temple and support the poor; they practised patience together; they prayed together, and together consecrated their beloved daughter to God in the temple. Oh! that all married persons would follow their example, and, in love and harmony, encourage each other to practise all Christian virtues. According to Holy Writ, God has, as I have observed elsewhere, expressed His pleasure with married people who agree well together. (Exod. xxv.) But He abhors those who quarrel with each other, abuse, insult, defame or curse each other, who prevent each other from doing good and even incite each other to wicked deeds. And what do they gain by their contentions? They deprive themselves of the assistance and grace of God, which they so much need in a life which is difficult at the best. The Almighty, who is a God of peace and harmony, cannot dwell where contention, strife, hatred and discord reign. They must live together until death separates them, as nothing else can break their ties. Therefore, if they live inharmoniously, they shorten their happiness in this world, and what have they to expect in the next? Those who do not love their neighbor with their whole heart will surely not enter the kingdom of heaven; and who is nearer to a wife than her husband? who nearer the husband than his wife, as according to Holy Writ, "the two are one flesh?" Christian couples should therefore daily pray to God for charity and unity; and should there come clouds between

them, let them instantly enquire into the cause and remove it, that their dissension may not gain ground until it is impossible to uproot it, and thus draw upon them temporal and eternal misery. If their disturbances are already far advanced, they must, as in every other sin, make a firm resolution to live peaceably, agree to reform their conduct, else they are on the way to destruction.

2. St. Joachim took refuge in prayer in his grief and sorrow, and though God did not appear to hear him for a long time, he continued with confidence, submitting to Providence, and abstaining from all complaints and murmurs against God. Follow his example in trials and trouble. Seek shelter in God; pray without ceasing; even if your prayer is not granted, do not despair. Never complain or murmur against the Almighty; for He has His own reasons, though you cannot comprehend them, for not immediately complying with your request. Reflect a little on your past life, and see how often God has called you and exhorted you to correct your faults, to become more zealous in His service; and you closed your ears to His admonitions. How can you expect that He will heed you immediately? How dare you complain, if He does not hear you? Perhaps, too, your prayer is such as is unworthy to be heard by the Almighty. You say your prayers, perhaps, with a thousand voluntary distractions, and do not hear yourself. How, then, can you be surprised that God does not hear them? St. Bernard says: "I greatly insult the Almighty, if I desire that He will hear my prayer, when I do not hear it myself, and pay no attention

to God nor to myself." "If you desire to be heard by God, take heed that you are first heard by yourself," says St. Ephrem, and he means that you should perform your devotions with attention and devotion. If even then you are not heard, think of the words of St. Gregory, who

says: "If you are not heard immediately, do not leave off praying, but continue your prayer and increase your devotion. God wishes to be begged. He will be forced, so to speak, and will be vanquished by importunity."

SIXTEENTH DAY OF AUGUST

ST. HYACINTH, CONFESSOR.

St. Hyacinth, a great ornament of the celebrated Order of Preachers, was born in Poland. He was the son of illustrious parents, who educated him according to the dictates of Christianity. During the years devoted to his studies, he was an example of innocence, piety and industry. His uncle, the bishop of Cracow, appointed him canon in his cathedral, so that he might employ him in the administration of his See. When he left for Rome, on account of troubles at home, he took Hyacinth with him. St. Dominic, so celebrated for his apostolic zeal, and for the miracles he wrought, was there at the time. Hyacinth, observing the wonderful zeal and piety of this holy man and of his companions, felt a growing desire to join them. He and three of his fellow-travellers, who had the same inclination, went to St. Dominic and begged him to receive them into his newly-founded Order. The Saint received them willingly, and instructed them how to lead a religious life, to preach in a Christian spirit, and to labor successfully for the spiritual welfare of men. After a few months, the holy founder had so thoroughly imbued them with his spirit, that he did not hesitate, after they had taken their vows, to send them into their native country, to preach the word of God and promote the salvation of souls.

At Cracow, where St. Hyacinth had formerly preached by his edifying life, he now began to preach with words, and God gave them such power, that he reformed the most hardened sinners, induced others to become more zealous in the service of the Almighty, and animated all to be more solicitous for the salvation of their souls. That all this might have a more solid foundation, he gathered a number of spiritual co-operators about him, and having instructed them according to the maxims of St.

Dominic, he established a Dominican monastery at Cracow. Hyacinth, who had been chosen superior by the new members, was an example to all. Besides the prescribed fast-days of his Order, he fasted all Fridays and vigils on bread and water. The greater part of the night he passed in fervent prayer, before the Blessed Sacrament. He allowed himself only a very short rest on the bare floor, and scourged himself severely every night. The whole day was occupied with hearing confessions, preaching, visiting the sick, and similar pious exercises. He had particular devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and to the Blessed Virgin, and never undertook anything before offering his work to God and begging the assistance of His Blessed Mother. She appeared to him once, on the eve of the feast of her Assumption, saying to him: "Be assured, my son, that thou shalt receive everything thou askest from my Son." The comfort these words afforded the holy man may be easily imagined. He, however, asked only for what was necessary for the salvation of souls. His own and his companion's pious labors were all directed to the same end. When he thought that he had firmly established religious principles and practices among the inhabitants of Cracow and the whole diocese, he sent his preachers to different places to labor in the same manner. He himself also left Cracow, and it is astonishing how many countries he journeyed through, how many convents he established everywhere for apostolic laborers, how many souls he converted to the true faith or to a more virtuous life. To aid his pious endeavors, God gave him power to work miracles, and so great was their number, that he might well be called the *Thaumaturgus*, or wonder-worker of his age. A miraculous event occurred in Russia, when the Tartars stormed Kiow, where the Saint had founded a church and convent. He was standing at the altar when they entered the city, spreading destruction and desolation around them. After finishing the Holy Sacrifice, the Saint, still in his priestly robes, took the Ciborium containing the Blessed Sacrament, and telling his priests to follow him without fear, he went towards the church door. When passing a large alabaster statue of the Blessed Virgin, before which he had often said his prayers, he distinctly heard a voice saying: "My son Hyacinth, wilt thou leave me here to be at the mercy of my enemies?" The Saint's eyes filled with tears. "How can I carry thee?" said he; "the burden is too heavy." "Only try," was the response; "my son will assist you to carry me without difficulty." The holy man with streaming eyes, took the statue and found it so light, that he could carry it with one hand. Thus, carrying the Ciborium in one hand and the statue in the

other, he and his companions passed through the enemy unassailed, to the gates of the city. Not finding any soldiers there, they passed on and reached Cracow in safety. Whether Almighty God made His servants invisible to the Tartars on this occasion, or in some other manner prevented them from harming them, is not known; but it is a fact that they left the city unmolested. When they reached the river over which there was no bridge, nor a boat to convey them across, the Saint, trusting in the power of Him whom he carried in his right hand, and in the intercession of her whom he held in his left, fearlessly stepped upon the water, and crossed it with dry feet. A similar, and perhaps still greater miracle happened at another time. He was going to Vicegrad to preach, but, on reaching the river, found no vessel which he could use to reach the opposite bank. Spreading his cloak on the water, he sat upon it, and was floated safely across and brought his companions over in the same manner. By this and many other miracles, God glorified His servant even on earth. For forty years this holy man had labored for the salvation of souls, when, in 1257, it was revealed to him that he should assist, in Heaven, at the triumph of the Blessed Virgin, on the feast of her glorious Assumption. On the feast of St. Mary ad Nives, he was taken sick. On the eve of the Assumption he gave his last instruction to the priests of his Order; after which he prepared for the festival, and, having recited the office of the day, he fixed his eyes on heaven, and said the psalm, "In thee, O Lord, have I hoped," to the words, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit," when he calmly expired, at the age of 74. The innocence and chastity which he possessed at the time of his baptism, remained unspotted until the end. After his death, the miracles which the Almighty continued to work through this Saint, were the means of proclaiming to all the world, the sanctity and merits of His blessed servant.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. St. Hyacinth, carrying the Saviour of the world in one hand, and in the other, the statue of the Blessed Virgin, walked past his enemies through the city. Happy are they who carry Jesus and Mary, not only on their lips, but also in their hands! They will ever walk safely amid dangers, unharmed by the enemies of their salvation. Some carry Mary alone on their lips, not</p>	<p>Jesus; they make some show of being devout to the Blessed Virgin, by saying certain prayers; but they offend Jesus, the Divine Son of Mary, most grievously, flattering themselves that, by their devotion to the Blessed Virgin, they are secure against the fire of hell. This is a terrible deceit of Satan. Such devotion is no devotion to the Divine Mother; as, to be devout to</p>
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her, it is required, above all things, to do nothing which is displeasing to her, but to do all that is agreeable in her sight. As, then, neglect of her Divine Son, whom she loves above all, must be displeasing to her, how can any one hope for salvation when his whole devotion consists in a few prayers or pious acts? One who does this, divides Jesus from Mary. You must carry Jesus and Mary at the same time, and not only in your mouth, but also in your hands. You must show, by your works, that you love both with your whole heart. If you love Jesus, see that you do not offend Him; if you love Mary, arouse not the wrath of Him whom she loves above all things. Such devotion will shield you against all dangers to your salvation, and lead you to everlasting peace and rest.

2. For forty years St. Hyacinth was devoted solely to the glory of God and the salvation of souls. He has now enjoyed, for more than five hundred years, the heavenly joys in recompense for his labors, and he will enjoy them for all eternity, O! how richly God rewards the services of His elect! "If, for one hundred

years of service, He bestowed one hour of Heavenly bliss, the reward would be great," says St. Chrysostom. How grateful should we be, when, as the true faith teaches us, He promises us an eternal reward in Heaven for such short service! Who would not serve, with pleasure, so bountiful a Master? How blind and foolish are those who prefer to serve Satan! Does Satan reward his servants more liberally than God? Ask the reprobate; they will tell you. Listen to what the Almighty said, in times long past, of the difference that will, one day, be between His servants and those of Satan, and then resolve which you will serve; "Behold!" says He, "my servants shall eat, and you shall be hungry; behold, my servants shall drink, and you shall be thirsty. Behold, my servants shall rejoice, and you shall be confounded; behold, my servants shall praise for joyfulness of heart, and you shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for grief of spirit." (Isaias, lxxv). What else does this mean but: "My servants shall be eternally happy in Heaven, but you shall be eternally unhappy in hell."

SEVENTEENTH DAY OF AUGUST.

ST. ROCH CONFESSOR.

The parents of St. Roch, who were of high nobility and enjoyed great wealth, for many years had no offspring. Appealing to the Blessed Virgin, they begged her intercession, that they might be blessed with a child, who would make good use of their riches, and serve God with fervor and zeal. Their prayer was heard. At Montpellier, in France, in the year 1284, a son was born to them. Roch, as they named the child sent them by heaven, manifested, in his most tender infancy, that God had a great future in store for him. He was born with a red cross

upon his breast. On Wednesdays and Saturdays, he would partake of nourishment from his mother's breast but once. The easiest way to quiet him when he cried, was to show him a picture of the Blessed Virgin, or give him one in his little hands. The careful education which his parents gave him, preserved his innocence. At the age of twenty, he lost his parents, and was left in possession of a large fortune. Fearing, however, that he could not save his soul as a rich man, and preferring eternal to temporal goods, he resolved to follow Christ in poverty, and taking all the ready money he had, he gave it to the poor. He did the same with the proceeds of a few of the estates which he sold. He left the administration of the rest of his property to his uncle, assumed a pilgrim's garb and left home, intending to go to Rome. He lived by alms on his journey, and suffered much misery. Arriving on Tuscan ground, he was informed that, in Aquapendente, a pestilence was making terrible havoc among the inhabitants. Feeling an intense desire to nurse those attacked by the dreadful malady, and to offer his life to God as a sacrifice of Christian charity, he went to the hospital, begged permission to attend the sick, and immediately began to serve them with the most ~~self-sacrificing~~ devotion. It seemed as if God rewarded him by relieving the whole city; for, the pestilence ceased to rage, and the people were soon restored to their former health. The same took place at Cesena, whither the Saint had gone, on hearing that the pestilence had appeared there. Finally he reached Rome, but only to find many of the people dying of the contagion. The Cardinal, who had heard his confession and was therefore acquainted with his innocence and virtue, asked him to pray God to avert this evil from the city. The saint obeyed and received from God the assurance that his prayer was heard. The result confirmed the truth of this revelation; for, the city was immediately freed from the disease. For three years, St. Roch remained in Rome, praying, visiting the churches and tending the sick. When he left Rome, he visited several other cities where he performed similar acts of charity, all with the willingness and joy of a heart devoted to God. Among these places was Piacenza, where the saint waited, for a considerable time, upon those stricken with the pestilence. At last it was the will of God that he himself should be seized with a very painful malady. He suffered so intensely, that he frequently broke out into loud lamentations. That the other sick should not be disturbed by his moans, he requested to be laid on the public street. This was done; but the people in the neighborhood, fearing that they might become contaminated by his malady, forced the Saint to leave the city for which he had done

so much. He was not disturbed by this, but rather rejoiced as it made him resemble his Saviour who always repaid evil with good. Taking his staff in his hand, he mustered all his remaining strength, and with the greatest effort, dragged his sick body outside of the gates of the city. In some woods near by, he found a little hut, which he entered and laid himself down upon the floor, hoping that there, forsaken by men, he would end his life. But it was God's will that he should live longer to suffer and thereby increase his merit. Not far from the wood stood a castle, the residence of a nobleman. One of the dogs of this gentleman, during the dinner, took some food from the table, and carried it straight to the hut. This was frequently repeated. Near the hut was a spring, where the Saint could quench his thirst, bathe his wounds and allay his pains. As soon as he had recovered from his malady, he re-entered Piacenza, where the pestilence was still carrying off numbers, and making the sign of the cross in all the streets and over the hospitals, he cured all who were ill with the pestilence. The people, becoming aware to whom they owed their deliverance, came in crowds to the Saint to express their gratitude. But he went back to his hut. A divine voice admonished him to return to his native place, as new ordeals awaited him. He obeyed without hesitation, and after passing through great hardships, arrived in France.

His severe fasts, all the difficulties and sufferings he had undergone had so altered his appearance, that none recognized him; and the people of the very village which had once belonged to him, believing him to be a spy, arrested and conducted him to Montpellier, his native place. The governor, before whom they took him, was his uncle, but not even he could recognize the Saint, who being unwilling to make himself known, incurred greater suspicion, and was cast into prison, where he remained for five long years. He desired to resemble his Saviour in this also, as "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." He spent all his time in praying and praising God. When the day and hour of his death were revealed to him, he asked the jailor to send him a priest, that he might make his confession. The priest came and found him resplendent with heavenly light. Having heard his confession, and thus becoming aware of his holiness, he immediately went to the governor and told him how he had found the prisoner, and added that verily they had imprisoned not only an innocent man, but a very great Saint. Although the governor laughed at the priest's words, he nevertheless ordered the jailor to investigate the matter. When the jailor received the message, he went to see the Saint, and on opening the door found the whole prison filled with a supernatural light, and the

prisoner stretched on the ground, a corpse. A tablet lying beside him, told his name. The governor, awestruck at this information, imparted it immediately to his mother, who was St. Roch's grand-mother. Hastening to the prison, the lady recognized, by the red cross on his breast, that he was indeed her grandson, whom she had long mourned as dead. The feelings of the inhabitants of the city, especially those of the Saint's relatives, can well be imagined. The holy death of this great servant of God took place in the 34th year of his age. The obsequies of the Saint were conducted with great magnificence, and St. Roch was thenceforth honored as a special patron against pestilence, and his intercession was invoked to avert it, with the most beneficial results.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Roch doubted the possibility of saving his soul while in possession of great temporal wealth, and therefore resolved to live according to the example of Christ, in voluntary poverty. The possession of worldly riches in itself does not prevent us from obtaining heaven. We may be rich and yet save our souls. A great many Saints, who possessed large fortunes, are examples of this, although it cannot be denied, that the riches of this world have prevented many persons from saving their souls, and are the occasion of eternal damnation. Christ Himself confirms this in the following words: "Amen I say to you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven; and again I say to you it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matth. xix.) Many make themselves deserving of damnation on account of their riches, because they have obtained them by unjust or sinful means, as has already been said; others, because they do not return ill-gotten goods to the rightful owner; others, again, because they do not use their money well, but squander it frivolously, give too

little of it to the poor, and employ it for the purpose of committing sin. Many merit damnation by means of their wealth, because they set their hearts too much upon their possessions, loving them inordinately, even more than their God. They think very little of their salvation, of eternity, but only how they can preserve and increase their means, like the rich man in the Gospel, who says: "What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? I will pull down my barns and build greater, and into them I will gather all things that are grown to me, and my goods. And I will say to my soul: Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thy rest, eat, drink, make good cheer." (Luke, xii.) St. Paul calls avarice, "idolatry." (Ephes. v.) because, as St. Thomas explains it, an avaricious man worships his money and his possessions like an idol, and loves them more than the true God. "I have become rich, I have found me an idol," said Ephraim. (Osee, xii.) Is it surprising that an idolator is damned? Any one considering all this, will not wonder that St. Roch feared that he would not attain to salvation while in possession of

great riches. Yet God does not demand that all should abandon their wealth and leave it to the poor, as St. Roch did, but only, that, when they rightfully possess it, they set not their hearts upon it. He wills that they make good use of it. But when they possess it unlawfully, He demands that they shall, under pain of damnation, restore it to the rightful owner.

II. St. Roch desired more fervently to obtain treasures in heaven than those of earth, and to acquire them, he lived in voluntary poverty, nursed the sick, patiently bore hardships and trials, and exercised other virtues until the end. O! how wisely St. Roch acted in this! Temporal riches are vain; they cannot fill the heart with satisfaction and happiness. They are difficult to get, require much labor and anxiety, and when obtained, are uncertain. They are so easily lost again! In one hour, the richest man may become a beggar. But even if we keep them until the end of our life, we must leave them behind us when we die. We cannot take them with us to the other world. They do not protect us from sickness or accident. They do not prevent death from approaching us, much less, its taking us away. They do not shield us from the wrath of the Most High. "Whom does death spare on account of his riches?" asks St. Basil. From whom does sickness depart in consideration of his money? "Neither shall their gold or their silver deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord," says the Holy Ghost. (Sophon. i.) Neither at death nor at the judgment will they bring comfort, if

they are not employed well. Yes, even their remembrance is a sting to the rich, as is said in Holy Writ: "O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that has peace in his possessions," (Eccl. xli.) Quite different is the comfort imparted by heavenly riches. These are possessions that fill the heart with real happiness. Having obtained them, we may possess them in security; no one can rob us of them. They console us in our last hour, and we take them with us to the other world. They speak for us at the throne of God and cheer us. Although they are not able to ward off physical death, they obtain for us life everlasting, and bring us into possession of an inheritance, which we shall retain in peace and security for all eternity. Who, then would not rather endeavour to procure these treasures than those which this world gives and again takes away? By good works, by the exercise of patience in crosses and sufferings, by the practice of virtue, by keeping the commandments of God and of the church, we can obtain them. "If you desire to be rich, to possess wealth, my dear brethren," says St. Gregory, "seek after real treasures." Real treasures are those which are spiritual and heavenly. To this the Saviour exhorts us: "Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth, where the rust and the moth consume, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither the rust nor the moth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." (Matth. vi.)

EIGHTEENTH DAY OF AUGUST.

THE HOLY YOUTH, AGAPITUS, MARTYR, SAINT HELENA, EMPRESS, ST.
CLARE OF MONTE-FALCO, VIRGIN.

The Roman Martyrology mentions these three Saints to-day in terms of great praise. We will therefore say a few words about each of them. St. Agapitus was but 15 years old, when he was apprehended by the tyrant Aurelian, on account of being a Christian. As he unflinchingly proclaimed his belief in Christ, he was whipped with scourges and then cast into a dungeon, without any food, that he might thus be forced to forsake Christianity. When Antiochus, the prefect, found him, at the end of five days, more determined than before, he ordered a live coal to be put upon his head. The brave youth stood immovably under this torture, and praising God, said: "A head, which would wear an eternal crown in Heaven, must not hesitate to wear suffering and pain upon earth. Wounds and burns make my head the more worthy to be crowned with eternal glory."

Antiochus, greatly provoked, ordered them to whip the holy youth till his body became one great wound, after which they hung him by the feet over a fire, hoping to suffocate him. But they failed; for, after a long silence, he addressed the prefect saying: "Behold, Antiochus, the people will say that all thy ingenuity, all thy wit, ends in smoke." Enraged at this remark, the tyrant had him again cruelly whipped and ordered boiling water to be poured into the open wounds. After this, they knocked all his teeth out and broke his jaws with blows. God punished the tyrant for his cruelty; He caused him to fall from his seat and break his neck. Aurelian, hearing of this, ordered the martyr to be thrown to the wild beasts, but as they refused to touch him, he was finally beheaded. Thus ended the glorious martyrdom of the holy youth, Agapitus, in the year 275.



St. Helena the spouse of Constantine Chlorus, and mother of Constantine the Great, is one of the most celebrated Catholic empresses. It was greatly due to her influence that her son Constantine became converted to the christian faith, built so many churches to the honor of the Almighty, and not only fearlessly protected the christian faith, but spread it through many

countries. By divine inspiration, she went to Jerusalem, to visit the Holy places, and seek the cross on which our Saviour had died. She happily succeeded in finding the cross, though not without great hardship. She erected many magnificent temples in the Holy Land and endowed them richly. She visited the virgins who had consecrated themselves to God ; lived for some time among them, and poorly clad, she served them at table, and performed, with most edifying humility, the most menial labor. She was excited to this by the great reverence she entertained for those virgins, in each of whom she recognized a handmaid of the Most High, and a spouse of Christ. The amount of alms which the pious empress gave to the poor, not only in the Holy Land, but wherever she went, is incalculable. When she returned to Rome, she continued her saintly life, and was a model to all of Christian perfection. In the eightieth year of her life, it pleased the King of kings to call the holy empress to receive the crown of a kingdom of which there is no end. She carefully prepared for death, and having given her last instructions to her son and to all about her, she committed her soul, with the most devout prayers, into the hands of the Almighty.



St. Clare of Monte-Falco is so called from the name of her birthplace, to distinguish her from the other St. Clare who was a native of Assisi. She was born in the thirteenth century and having been early instructed in piety by her parents, is an example of the fruits of a Christian education. She had hardly attained her fourth year, when she would pass whole hours on her knees before a crucifix. When only six years old, she desired to leave the world and join her sister Joan, who lived a very devout life in a convent. Even at that early period, her conduct was more to be admired than imitated. She wore a knotted rope around the waist, scourged herself to blood, and lived only on bread, water and undressed roots. Her rest at night was upon the bare ground or upon straw. She passed many hours of the night and the day in prayer, which she performed either standing, kneeling or lying prostrate on the ground. Her modesty of manner was almost without parallel; she cultivated this most assiduously, regarding it as the only means of preserving her chastity inviolate. How highly she esteemed virginal purity can be judged by her earnest assurances that she would rather suffer the torments of hell than commit the least sin against purity. She, therefore, always kept her eyes cast upon the ground when conversing with her nearest relatives, even with her

own brother. When, one day, he asked her the reason of this, she replied: "In conversation, one needs the tongue, not the eyes." She was always as ready to work as to pray, and the harder the labor she performed, the more it pleased her; for, all she aimed at was to crucify her body. After the death of her sister, she was chosen superior; and although she endeavored by tears and entreaties to evade the honor, she was obliged to submit. She then accepted her office with great trust in God, and led those under her charge more by example than by words to the exact observance of the rule of St. Augustine, which had been recommended to her sister by the Bishop of Spoleto. Although she herself was very strict in fasting, she exacted nothing from those under her direction, which was not in the rules. She evinced a motherly solicitude for them. If one of the sisters was sick, she hardly ever left her side, and endeavored to show her every possible kindness. Much that might be told of this gentle superior, of her love to God and man, especially to her enemies, of her patience and humility, of her zeal to promote the honor of the Almighty, and prevent every transgression against His law, we have to pass in silence. But of her great love for her crucified Saviour we must say a few words. The subject of her meditations was generally the sufferings and death of Christ, and she spoke of nothing more frequently, and scarcely ever without shedding tears. The sight of the image of her crucified Lord would put her in ecstasy. She would pass whole hours before it, and her mind was almost always occupied with the sufferings of our Saviour. "Can it be possible to think of anything else, when we have looked at Christ on the Cross?" said she one day. There was hardly a picture to be seen in the convent that did not represent the sufferings of Jesus. This was her wish, in order that she and all the others might be continually reminded of Him. She prayed to Him, one day, most fervently to let her feel some of the pains He suffered. Her request was granted. He appeared to her laden with the cross. The pains she endured at that moment, were so intense that she could not have lived another instant, if He, who had given them to her, had not turned death from her by a miracle. The Almighty caused a miracle to be wrought upon her in compensation for this extraordinary devotion to the sufferings and death of Christ. After her death, the instruments of the Passion, the cross, the three nails, the crown of thorns, were found deeply impressed on her heart. The Almighty who thus glorified his handmaid after her death, had favored her with many visions during her life. In one of them Christ announced her approaching death. Clare prepared for it most carefully. Christ again appeared to her and absolved

her from all her sins and assured her of her eternal salvation; upon which she, in an ecstasy of joy, exclaimed: "O my Jesus! how great is the reward Thou deignest to give those who serve Thee." Many blessed spirits accompanied our Saviour, to whom she said: "Take me away, take me away!" After this, she lay quiet, as if she were dead; but suddenly opening her eyes, she said: "Sister, I am going now to Christ, who calls me, I commend you and myself to Him." With these words, she ended her angelic life on earth, and began a much happier one in Heaven. The holy body still remains incorrupt, and the miraculous heart is yet to be seen.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. "A head which would wear an eternal crown in heaven, must not hesitate to wear pain and suffering on earth." Thus spoke St. Agapitus, and it means, that "he who would rejoice in heaven, must be willing to suffer on earth." The Apostles, the friends of our Lord, and other Saints walked in this path. Christ Himself went to heaven by no other way than the way of the cross. "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." (Acts, xiv.) How can you seriously hope to save your soul if you will not suffer? Shall God prepare for you a special path, strewn with roses? Ah! do not believe this. We must suffer, if we would enter the kingdom of heaven, if we would become partakers of eternal joys.

II. St. Helena passed her whole life in holy works, agreeable to God, as visiting the holy places, building magnificent temples, giving alms, and persuading her son, the emperor, to become a Christian and protect the Catholic faith. Oh! how great a consolation must be his, who, when dying can look back on

a well spent life! How great must be the grief and fear of him who is obliged to confess: "My days have fled away and have seen no good!" (Job, ix.) If you would act prudently, seek to obtain that which will afford you consolation in your last hour.

III. St. Clare had, besides many virtues, an especial devotion to the bitter passion and death of Christ, and made them the subject of frequent meditation. You are not worthy to partake of the fruits of Christ's passion, if you do not, with sincere devotion, often remember it and humbly thanking Him, strive, with all the powers of your soul, to love Him who died for love of you. Repent of the coldness of your heart hitherto, and worship Him in future with fervent zeal. "If you desire to progress from one virtue to another, from one grace to another," says St. Bonaventure, "daily contemplate the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ." "Jesus Christ should be always in your heart, and the image of the crucified Saviour should never be out of your thoughts," says St. Bernard.

NINETEENTH DAY OF AUGUST.

ST. LOUIS, BISHOP OF TOULOUSE.

St. Louis was the son of Charles II, king of Naples and Sicily, and of Mary, the daughter of Stephen V, of Hungary. In his childhood, he gave great promise of future holiness. He never showed any inclination for those sports which are generally the pastime of young princes. Prayer, the reading of devout books, and pious discourses were his only pleasures. At the early age of seven years, he mortified his body in order to preserve his purity, was very modest in his habits, and cultivated the most tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin. He never allowed a woman to enter his room, never spoke to one alone, except to his mother and sister, looked none in the face and generally kept his eyes down. When the Queen of France, his nearest relative, wished to salute him with a kiss, according to the custom of the country, he would not permit it; he even refused it to his own mother; and when she said: "But my son, I am thy mother," he replied: "I know well that thou art my mother, but I know also that thou art a woman; and it is not proper that a woman should kiss a servant of the Most High." This virginal modesty acquired for him such veneration, that, at Court, he was called nothing else but the angel. God also designed him to practise patience early in life. His father, unfortunate in war, was captured at Barcelona. Although by a treaty he was set free, his three sons, among whom was Louis, and fifty noblemen were retained as hostages by the king of Aragon, until the stipulations were fulfilled. Thus Louis became a prisoner. But he never complained; he was always cheerful and contented, and frequently said to his companions: "Believe me, adversity is more wholesome to those who desire to serve God, than continual prosperity; for the latter blinds and seduces men." During the time of his imprisonment, he increased his exercises of devotion as much as possible. He was also very assiduous in studying theology under the direction of the priests of the order of St. Francis, for whom he entertained a most sincere friendship. He was permitted to go about within the walls of the city, but he went nowhere so frequently as to the churches and hospitals. In the former, he always appeared with such devotion, that he was a model to all; in the latter, he did all possible deeds of kindness to the sick. During an illness which befell him while he was in captivity, he vowed to take the habit of the Franciscans,

if God restored his health. No sooner was he convalescent, than he requested admission to the order, which however, was refused him, through fear of his father's wrath. After he had been released, a marriage with the sister of the king of Aragon was proposed to him, and his father promised that he should succeed him on the throne of Naples; but the prince remained firm in his resolution to leave the world, disregarding the crown and all temporal goods in order to serve God and work out his salvation. After long pleading, he received permission from his father to enter the priesthood. Soon after his ordination, the Bishop of Toulouse died, and Pope Boniface VIII, immediately appointed Louis to the vacant see. The saint employed every means in his power to evade this dignity; but at last, seeing resistance useless, he consented, on condition that he would first be allowed to fulfil his vow and take the habit of the Franciscans. Having received permission, he entered the monastery, was instructed in the rules of the religious life, pronounced the three vows, and was then consecrated bishop by the Pope himself. In his new dignity, he led the life of a poor religious, but fulfilled his office with the zeal and wisdom of a true bishop. He travelled through his whole diocese and founded benevolent institutions in many places. To visit, comfort and assist the sick was his greatest delight. Out of his income he retained only sufficient to support him as a poor religious, and gave all the rest to the needy, of whom he had twenty-five daily at his table, serving them himself. He was full of compassion for the poor lepers, tenderly embracing them, washing their feet, seating them at his own table, and waiting on them, as if he had been their servant. He once had the happiness of entertaining Christ Himself in the form of a leper. By his fervent preaching he converted many sinners and incited the faithful to zeal in serving the Almighty. Although he did a great deal of good in this manner, he still desired to enter a convent and live solely for his own salvation. He, therefore, went to Rome to seek the Pope's permission. Having reached Brignolles, the castle in which he had been born, in Provence, he was taken dangerously sick. On the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, he made his confession, received Holy Communion and Extreme Unction; after which he remained absorbed in fervent prayer. He frequently repeated the Hail Mary, and when asked why he did so, replied: "I have always placed my trust, next to God, in the Blessed Virgin; she will assist me in my last moments." At last, he gave his pure soul to his Creator, while impressing a kiss upon the crucifix. At the same hour, a holy Franciscan brother, during his prayers, saw the soul of St. Louis ascend to Heaven, accompanied by a

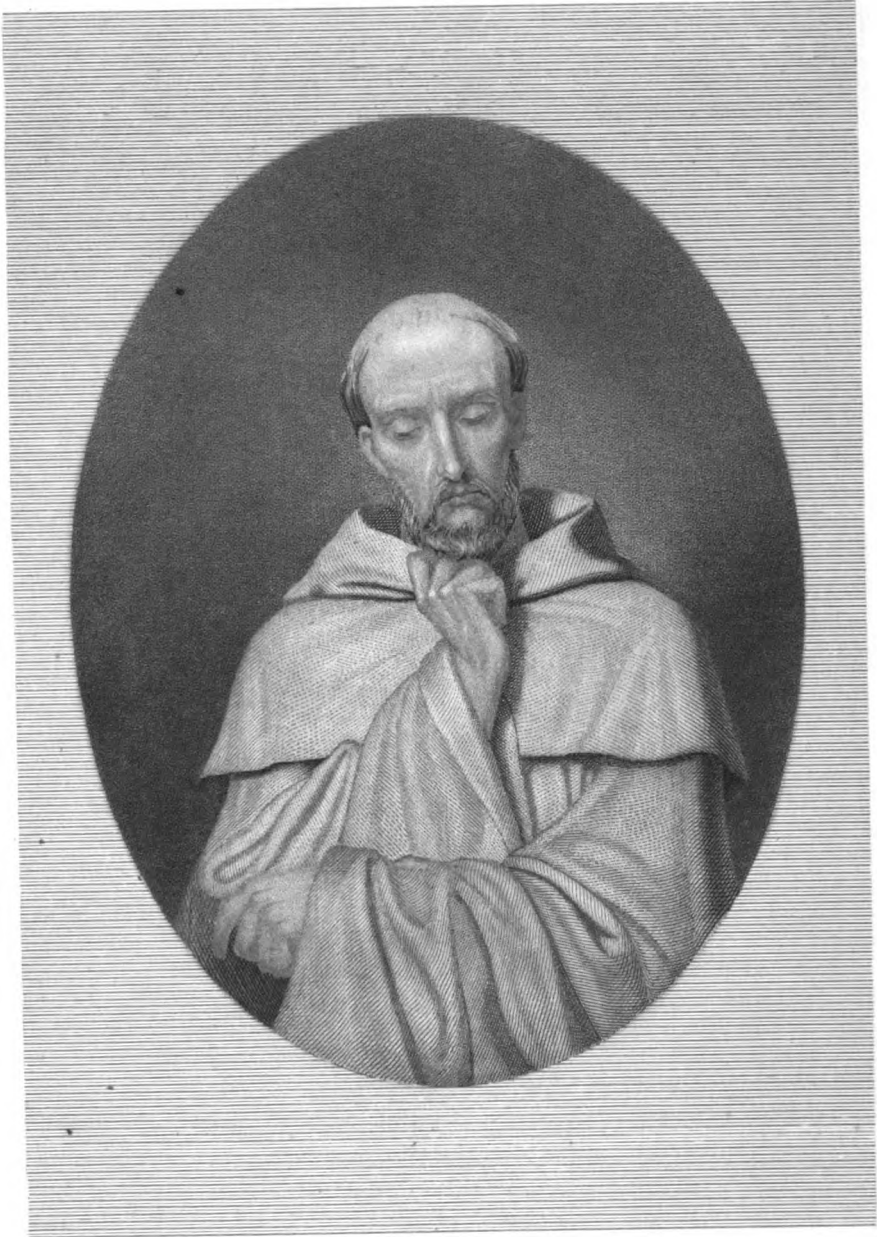
great many angels, and heard distinctly the words. "This is the reward of those who serve the Almighty with a pure heart." Many miracles wrought through the intercession of this saint gave his name high renown in the Christian world, after his departure.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Louis cultivated a special modesty in his demeanor, kept his eyes perfectly controlled and would not allow a kiss even where there was no danger of sin. He did all this to preserve his angelic purity. The same was practised by all those whose lives were chaste and pure. Those who are free and unrestrained in their manners, who do not guard their eyes, who regard kissing and other immodest frivolities as harmless, who even laugh at their confessor when he represents the danger to them, may well be said to have no purity of heart. "An audacious eye is the sign of an impure heart," says St. Augustine. The same may be said of bold manners. If you desire to lead a chaste life, imitate St. Louis, and strive to be modest in your deportment. Control your eyes. Do not allow them to wander too freely about, as by so doing you give yourself opportunities to sin. Allow no wanton liberties. David and many others would not have committed such great sins, if they had not permitted their eyes such liberties. "Turn away thy face from a woman dressed up, and gaze not about upon another's beauty; for many have perished by the beauty of a woman, and hereby lust is kindled as a fire." (Eccl. ix.)

II. The soul of the chaste Louis was carried by the angels to heaven,

with the words: "This is the reward of those that serve God with a pure heart." Whither and by whom is the soul of the unchaste carried? Certainly not to heaven; for, nothing unclean can enter the kingdom of God. Neither is it carried by the angels; for, they are pure spirits and detest everything unclean. There remain none but the unclean spirits the devils, whose greatest pleasure consists in impurity. These carry the souls of the unchaste into hell. But what awaits them there? Ah! dearly have they to pay for those short-lived pleasures in which they indulged against the laws of the Almighty. The impure must suffer the most terrible pains without ceasing, without end. Is it possible that a human being should believe this, and then commit a sin, the punishment of which is so sure to follow? Is it possible? Unhappily not only possible, but only too common. Why is this? Because we do not seriously consider what we confess with our lips. If you will instil into your heart a real horror for the sin of impurity, think often of the sufferings of hell, into which this sin casts all who are addicted to it. "Call to mind the terrible pains of hell. The heat of hell-fire will extinguish in you the heat of your lust;" says St. Bernard.



Saint Bernard

POSSIBLE Publisher.



THE TWENTIETH DAY OF AUGUST.

ST. BERNARD.

St. Bernard, illustrious throughout the whole Christian world for his great learning, holiness and miracles, was born of very pious parents who had, besides him, six sons and one daughter. Before he was born, his mother dreamed that she was bearing a dog, which barked while still in the womb. The priest to whom she related this, said : " Fear not ; you will give birth to a child, who will enter the religious state, watch over the Church of God, combat her enemies, and heal the wounds of many with his tongue." The mother was greatly comforted, and when her child was born, she endeavored to educate him most carefully. To her great joy, she perceived that, early in childhood, he possessed a most tender love for God and the Blessed Virgin, a great horror for sin, a most watchful care to preserve his innocence and purity, a great contempt for all temporal goods, and a high esteem of all that related to God and the salvation of souls. One day, while still a small boy, he suffered intensely from headache ; and when a woman came to him to pronounce some superstitious words over him, the pious child, perceiving her intentions, leaped out of bed and drove her from the room, saying that he would rather die of pain than be relieved by sin. The Almighty recompensed this heroic conduct by immediately relieving him of his pain. In his early youth, he was visited by the Infant Jesus, one Christmas eve, from which dates the tender love St. Bernard always felt for the Saviour. Having early lost his pious mother, he had much to suffer from wicked persons on account of his manly beauty. He always showed himself brave, however, and either escaped by flight, or drove away those who endeavored to tempt him to sin, or saved himself by loudly calling for help. An unchaste person had, one day, secretly entered the chamber of the youth to tempt him. Bernard immediately cried out : " Murder ! Murder ! " Those who came to his rescue, on seeing no one who would kill him, asked him why he called for help. " Are they then no murderers who endeavor to rob me of the priceless treasure of my purity, and thus deprive my soul of life everlasting ? " said the pious youth. To guard this treasure more securely, he prayed with the greatest devotion, most carefully controlled his senses, especially his eyes, severely chastised his body, and cherished a filial love for the Blessed Virgin. One day, contrary to his resolution, he had imprudently

looked upon something impure. No sooner did he perceive his fault, than he sprang into the river, though it was in the depth of winter, and remained there until he was almost frozen. In this manner he punished himself, and God delivered him, from that moment, from all impure temptations. This occurrence was a great incentive to the young man to enter the religious state as soon as possible, in order to be more removed from the danger of losing his purity. His brothers and other relatives tried to dissuade him, but by his eloquent descriptions of the vanities of this world, he persuaded his uncle and four of his brothers to enter with him, into the Cistercian Order, founded by St. Robert. While on the way to the monastery with thirty of his companions, he met his youngest brother, Nivard, playing with some companions of his own age. Guido, the eldest brother said to him ; " Nivard, we are going into the convent now, and leave you sole heir to all our property." Inspired by the Almighty, Nivard replied : " Ah! you intend to keep Heaven for yourselves and leave the earth to me. This division is too unequal." He resolved to follow his brothers, and arrived at the convent a few days later. Hardly had St. Bernard entered the novitiate, when he became a model of monastic perfection. Pages could be filled with the description of his virtues, his humility, his severity towards himself, his love for God and man, his devotion at prayer. He was no less remarkable for his wisdom and the talents with which he was gifted. Hence, his abbot, St. Stephen, soon sent him to found and govern the monastery of Clairvaux. Bernard, still young, delicate in health and inexperienced in the duties of a superior, hesitated to accept the charge, but was obliged to obey. In the new convent, besides many other difficulties, he had to battle with poverty; but the Almighty often came to the relief of His faithful servant by miracle, and also inspired many to seek his direction in the religious life. Among these, was Bernard's own father. Henry, brother of the King of France, who visited the cloister, was, by a few words of its abbot, persuaded to take the habit. The sister of St. Bernard was the only one left in the world, and though she was leading a life of pleasure and dissipation, he induced her to make the same resolution. The prayers which he offered for her, and his earnest exhortations won her from the vanities of the world and induced her to turn her heart to God. The holy abbot at first ruled those under him rather severely; but having received a divine admonition, he was more lenient. He won the affection of all under his charge, and made them willing to obey him; moreover, he was an example to them in everything. Towards himself he continued his rigor to the end, in fasting, penances, scourgings and long vigils.

When he occasionally perceived in himself the least indolence, he would reanimate himself by saying; "Bernard, why art thou here?" Meanwhile, his fame spread throughout all countries, and everywhere people spoke of his great knowledge and experience. Several Episcopal sees were offered to him, which he always humbly declined, under the plea of his incapacity to fill so high an office. At the time of the great schism, which took place at a papal election, he was invited to attend the council, and to him was left the decision of the important question, whether Innocent II. or Peter Leo, who took the name of Anaclet, should be recognized as the lawful pope. After mature deliberation and many fervent prayers, the Saint gave his decision, and all submitted to it. Henry, King of England, who favored the anti-pope, was induced by St. Bernard to recognize and protect Innocent II. He had more difficulty in persuading William, duke of Guienne, to do penance for his iniquities and obey the true pope; but he succeeded. Many other important questions were decided by him to the great benefit of the church. One of the most difficult undertakings imposed on him by the Sovereign Pontiff was to unite all the crowned heads of Europe in a crusade against the Saracens. St. Bernard obeyed the papal order; and when he exhorted the people to go on the crusade, God worked through him such miracles, that all were convinced that the project was agreeable to the Almighty. When, however, the expedition had failed, the holy man was everywhere calumniated, derided, persecuted. Bernard bore it all with great patience, and said: "It is better that they murmur against me than against God. I do not care if they impair my honor, so that the honor of the Almighty remains inviolate." God defended the name of His faithful servant by many new miracles, which not only closed the mouths of his slanderers, but placed him higher in the estimation of every one than ever before. There are few Saints of whom so many and so well authenticated miracles are recorded, as of St. Bernard. It is well known that, at Constance, he gave sight to eleven who were blind, restored the use of their hands to ten, and of their feet to eighteen. At Cologne, three who were dumb, ten deaf, and twelve lame were miraculously healed. At Spire, he performed similar miracles. Countless sick persons recovered their health by partaking of the bread he had blessed. Besides this, he relieved many who were possessed of the Evil One, and had the gift of prophecy. We must omit the details of all this, to say a few words of his happy end. The holy man, already completely exhausted by his many journeys, penances, and illnesses, was seized with a painful malady. He could retain no food whatever,

while he suffered, at the same time, from swelling of the feet and other disorders. He bore it all not only with patience but with cheerfulness, and received the holy sacraments with great devotion. Many prelates of the church and other persons of distinction visited him and sympathized with him on account of his sufferings; but he answered; "I am a useless servant; an old barren tree ought to be felled and uprooted." Amidst the tears of all present, he yielded up his soul to God, at the age of 64, in the year 1153, having founded one hundred and sixty convents, written a great many works against heresies, in defence of the Catholic faith, and for the instruction of the faithful, and performed many other works for the welfare of the church and the salvation of souls. At Spire, a miraculous picture of the Blessed Virgin is still preserved, before which St. Bernard, one day, three times bowed his knees, exclaiming: "O gracious, O mild, O sweet Virgin Mary," and when he said: "I salute thee, Queen of Heaven," a voice came from the picture distinctly saying: "I salute thee, Bernard." In another city, a crucifix is shown, before which St. Bernard was fervently praying, when the Saviour stretched out His arms to embrace His faithful servant. Many other great favors which God granted to this Saint are to be found in the histories of his life. His works abound with the most wholesome advice to all classes of people. Often and emphatically he admonishes all to love God, to honor the Blessed Virgin and ask her intercession, and to practise good works.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

A great deal is to be found in the life of this Saint, which ought to inspire us to imitate him. I will here place a few of the principal points before you.

I. St. Bernard, when only a boy, would not allow any one to alleviate or cure a headache by superstitious means. Take care that you never resort to superstitious practices in sickness or on other occasions; for, it is committing a great sin against God. If you doubt whether a thing is superstitious or not, ask some priest before using it.

II. St. Bernard looked upon those who would tempt him to sin, as murderers, and called for help, as if his life had been in danger. May you so regard those who tempt you

to sin; for, they are murderers, because they seek to kill the spiritual life of your soul, and place you in danger of forfeiting eternal life and happiness. Therefore treat them as assassins. We do not laugh and jest with a murderer, but we call for help and defend ourselves with all our might. Earnest and brave must we show ourselves when we are tempted to do wrong. God commanded His people, in the Old Testament, to stone a fallen woman together with her seducer. Why? "Because she cried not out, being in the city." (Deut. xxii.) She ought to have cried out; but not doing this was a sign that she did not seriously desire to defend herself.

III. This holy man punished an

unguarded look at something impure, by throwing himself into the river and remaining there till he was almost frozen. He shows by this, that those who would lead a chaste life must carefully guard their eyes. What shall we say then of looking curiously or unnecessarily at the other sex, or at obscene pictures or certain theatrical scenes?

IV. St. Bernard induced many, by his example and exhortations, to embrace the religious life. A zealous servant of God is not content with serving the Almighty himself, but seeks also, by his words and example, to lead others to the same path.

V. When he was tempted to weariness in the service of God, he reanimated himself by saying: "Bernard, why art thou here?" Animate yourself in a similar manner, by recalling the destiny for which you were born, and ask yourself: "Why am I upon earth? For what was I created?"

VI. St. Bernard bore, with great patience, the derision and persecutions which he had to suffer on account of the unhappy end of the war to which he had called and encouraged the Christian princes. Do not regret too deeply if your plans and undertakings do not succeed as you expected. Be not disturbed if others mock you and persecute you.

VII. St. Bernard regarded himself as a useless servant, as a barren

tree which deserved to be cut down; so deep was his humility. How then can you feel so elated, when you have done some good action? Ought you not to have done much more? Should not your laziness, your negligence humble you before God?

VIII. The holy man, by founding one hundred and sixty convents, left many servants of the Lord, and by his books, many wholesome instructions which are yet very beneficial to all who read them. Take care that when you die, you do not leave the spirit of Satan in your children or in those whom you scandalized or tempted to do wrong. Especially, leave no obscene books or pictures which may be occasion of sin to others. Furthermore, St. Bernard was remarkable for his devotion to the Blessed Virgin. He called to Her in all his trials, and advised others to do the same, as is evident from his sermons. "Let us, says he, venerate Mary. It is the will of Him, who wishes that we should receive everything through her. In danger, in anxiety, in doubt, think of Mary, call to her." Somewhere else he says: "Let us have admittance to thy Son through thee, thou giver of graces, O Mother of life, O Mother of salvation." Follow the Saint's advice and example in this, and you will live free from sin, under the protection of Mary; find help in all your needs, and most surely gain your salvation.

TWENTY-FIRST DAY OF AUGUST.

ST. PRIVATUS, BISHOP AND MARTYR; ST. GERMANUS, PATRIARCH
OF CONSTANTINOPLE.

The holy bishop Privatus, whose festival is this day commemorated in the Roman Martyrology, was a native of Auvergne. Desiring to labor for the salvation of men, he studied theology and was ordained priest. The inhabitants of Mende, in the District of Gevaudan, wished him to become their bishop, as they were acquainted with his great zeal for the spiritual welfare of men. Privatus acceded to their wishes for the same reason that had induced him to study theology. In his episcopal functions he proved himself a true and indefatigable shepherd of his flock, which he guarded both by precept and example, and defended against the heretics as against destroying wolves. After some years, the Germans invaded France, under a duke, who was a bitter enemy of the Christians, and who devastated the country wherever he went. The inhabitants of Mende fled from the town and took refuge upon a high mountain in the neighborhood, which they fortified to the best of their ability. St. Privatus had built a hermitage on another mountain, to which he sometimes repaired to pray and to occupy himself with other pious works in solitude and silence. When the Germans, who besieged the mountains to which the inhabitants of Mende had fled, perceived that their efforts were useless, some of them ascended the other mountain, and entering the grotto of St. Privatus, they seized him, and demanded that he should advise the people of Mende to surrender themselves and sacrifice to the gods. Privatus replied fearlessly: "Were I to give such advice, I should not be worthy to be called a priest, much less, a bishop. Be assured that I will rather give my life than such wicked counsel." Enraged at this answer, the barbarians fell upon the holy bishop, and scourged and tormented him until they were tired. After this, they endeavored to force him to sacrifice to the gods. "How dare you ask me to sacrifice to your gods?" said the Saint; "I will never do it; I worship daily the true God, the Creator of Heaven and earth, and I would rather die a thousand deaths than sacrifice to your false gods." They then began again to whip, to kick and to torment him in every possible manner; but their wrath only augmented the courage of the holy bishop, who repeated his former words, and added: "You may torture me as you like, but you will never see me become

faithless to my God, nor deliver my flock to your tyranny. Besides, be assured that they would rather starve than surrender themselves to you." Hardly had the Saint uttered these words, when the barbarians attacked him in such a brutal manner, that, when they left him, they doubted not that he was dead. Seeing that they were unable to storm the mountain, they raised the siege and left the country. When the besieged became aware of this, they descended the mountain and sought their beloved bishop. They soon found him, but, alas! his whole body was wounded and maimed, and he was more dead than alive. They kissed his wounds amid floods of tears, and carrying him into the town, they nursed him most tenderly. Their unwearied solicitude succeeded in prolonging his life for a short time, which he employed in praising God and in instructing his beloved people, until at length, God called him, through a happy death, into a better life. This glorious martyrdom took place in the reign of the Emperor Valerian.



St. Germanus, Patriarch of Constantinople, was born in the middle of the seventh century. His exceedingly noble appearance, his abilities and his piety made him, even in his youth, dear to all who knew him. The innocence of his life, and the great talent he had manifested while studying theology, caused the Patriarch, who reigned at that period in Constantinople, to raise him early to the priesthood. The apostolic zeal he showed in protecting the true faith and opposing heresy, soon elevated him to the Episcopal Chair of Cyzicus. In this diocese, the heresy of the Monothelites prevailed, and the holy bishop had to labor unwearily to uproot from the minds of the people its wicked doctrines. But finally, after three years of toil, he had the joy to see that the Catholic faith reigned victoriously throughout the city. The Emperor Philippicus Bardanes, who greatly favored this heresy, could not endure the zeal of this holy bishop, and banished him from the city. But after he had been expelled from the throne, and Anastasius, a zealous Catholic, wore the crown, Germanus was recalled and elected Patriarch of Constantinople. The joy of the Catholics was exceedingly great when the holy man, after long hesitating, accepted the dignity. Under the Patriarch who had preceded him, many had forsaken the true faith and others had become extremely negligent in the service of the Most High. The former, the holy patriarch, endeavored to lead back into the fold of Christ; the latter, he stimulated to more fervent piety. In both

these labors he was blessed by the Almighty with great success. While he was thus promoting the honor of God, a large army of Arabs and Saracens marched against Constantinople and besieged the city. This siege lasted three years, during which time the town was frequently in danger of being taken by the barbarians. The holy Patriarch, who knew that the inhabitants were too weak to hold out much longer against so great a number of enemies, exhorted them to take refuge with God and the Blessed Virgin. He preached daily to them to do penance and thus appease the anger of God. The powerful intercession of the divine Mother he recommended to them with great eloquence, in order to increase their trust in her. When they were informed by some spies, that the barbarians were making ready to storm the city, he ordered a procession, in which he led the people, for three days in succession, around the walls, praying and singing while they carried an image of the Blessed Virgin. The Saracen General, seeing this procession from his camp, and hearing the prayers and hymns of the people, was, by the providence of God, so awed by the spectacle, that he determined to raise the siege and to make peace with the Emperor. Before his retreat, he desired to enter the city as a friend, with a few other officers. When he was under the gate of the city, he felt himself kept back, as if by an invisible hand. Raising his eyes, he saw above the gate an image of the Blessed Virgin, which filled him with such fear, that hastening back to the camp, he withdrew with his army, and taking to his ships, he fled away. All the inhabitants gave thanks to their Patriarch for having thus happily delivered them from the enemy, as it was he who had exhorted them to pray to the Blessed Virgin to intercede for them. Yet, notwithstanding the great favors which the city and the empire owed to the Saint, he was driven from Constantinople and from his Patriarchal Chair, when he had reached the venerable age of 90 years. Leo, the impious Emperor, surnamed the Isaurian, was guilty of this criminal ingratitude. Belonging to the Iconoclasts, or image-breakers, whose wicked works St. Germanus opposed by word and writing, he had the Saint removed, and banished from the city by a Council of heretical bishops. And thus this holy man ended in misery and banishment the innocent life which had been spent for the welfare of men. Among the Greek Fathers, there is none who has written more in praise of the Blessed Virgin, or who more earnestly exhorted his flock to honor her, than this Saint.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Privatus preferred death rather than give to the Christians in his charge a counsel which he considered evil. He acted rightly; for, as it is a work of Christian charity to give good counsel to others, so it is contrary to that love which, by the divine law, we owe to our neighbors, knowingly to give them bad counsel. Hence, be careful never to become guilty of this sin. Never advise any one to omit a good deed, much less to commit evil; for, you must remember that those who give bad counsel, become guilty before God of the iniquities which it causes. Nay, even if he who has been advised to do wrong, commits not the deed, yet he, who has given the advice, has sinned. But he who gives good counsel, partakes of the good done by his advice. And if the good which you advised is not done, you still have your merit with God, because you gave the advice. Take this lesson to heart. You can advise many to do good; you can advise them frequently to be present at holy Mass and at sermons; to go oftener to confession; to refrain from lying, cursing and other vices; to shun this or that occasion of sin. Improve every opportunity; for, it is conducive to your own and your neighbor's salvation.

II. St. Germanus was innocently banished, and died in misery. It is known that many other Saints ended their lives in banishment and in prison and in misery. But it is also known that St. Germanus, with many others, passed from this earthly misery, into a heavenly home. A

servant of God may die anywhere; he always finds his way to heaven. Whereas no matter where a sinner dies, he cannot escape hell. If you live piously, be not concerned whether death takes you here or there from this world; the gates of eternal happiness will be open to you. But if you lead a godless life, be sure that you are nowhere safe from hell, even should you take refuge in the temple of the Lord. You may die in the most holy of all places, and yet go to eternal destruction. Hence, abstain from all sin, wherever you are; as you may die at the place and be lost. And when you find yourself at a place where you have already offended God several times, and you foresee that you will again offend him, leave as quickly as possible, that you may not sin and die there, and be lost for all eternity. Tell me, would you like to die at the place where you so often committed sin, or where you are still perpetrating evil deeds? Certainly not; for, you would descend from that place directly to hell. How dare you then go to that place or remain in it? May you not die there? And if you do, whither will you go? "How dare you live in a place where you would fear to die?" asks St. Bernard. "If you will commit sin, seek a place where God does not see you," says St. Augustine. And I say to you: If you will do wrong, choose a place where you are quite sure that you cannot die. But where will you find it? Surely not on earth. Hence do not sin anywhere.

TWENTY-SECOND DAY OF AUGUST.

ST. TIMOTHY, ST. HIPPOLYTUS AND ST. SYMPHORIAN, MARTYRS.

The Roman Breviary places the commemoration of these three holy Martyrs in one lesson, although they did not all suffer in the same place or at the same time. St. Timothy came from Antioch to Rome, during the reign of Pope Melchiades, and as, at that period, the Christians were much persecuted, he went on foot through the city and encouraged the Christians to constancy. A whole year he worked in this manner to the great benefit of the faithful. When Tarquinius, the Prefect, was informed of it, he had him apprehended and thrown into a dark, damp dungeon. Having for some time suffered the miseries of imprisonment, he was brought before the judges and commanded to worship the gods. Finding him willing to suffer the greatest torments rather than obey their wicked commands, they cast him again into prison, after they had cruelly beaten and otherwise maltreated him. This was done a second and a third time. All manner of tortures were tried on him in vain. Timothy only became the more firmly resolved never to forsake his God. Finally, the order was given to behead him, which, to the great rejoicing of the holy martyr, was soon executed. Many idolaters, seeing his constancy, became converts to Christ.



St. Hippolytus, a bishop, greatly renowned for his holiness and learning, came from Arabia to Rome, during the time of Pope Callistus, to visit the tombs of the holy Apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul. At this period, Ulpian, a celebrated judge, and at the same time, a bitter enemy to the Christians, administered the affairs of the city. No sooner had he heard that St. Hippolytus had arrived, than he ordered him to be seized and brought into his presence. The holy bishop confessed, without hesitation, that he was a Christian. He was commanded to forsake Christ and worship the gods; but he refused to obey, and not only treated with contempt all promises and threats of the judge, but also bore the most cruel torments. The tyrant at last, caused the holy bishop to be tied hand and foot and thrown into a deep pit filled with water, where he ended his life.



St. Symphorian, a youth of twenty years, the son of a noble Senator of Autun, in France, was baptized by St. Benignus, a pupil of St. Polycarp, and instructed in the Christian faith. He led a blameless and truly Christian life, which he ended by a glorious martyrdom. The occasion of this was as follows. The heathen inhabitants of the city celebrated, according to their custom, a special festival in honor of the goddess Cybele, whom they regarded as the mother of all the gods. Her image was carried through the city with great splendor, and all the heathens prostrated themselves before it, and worshipped it on bended knees. Symphorian, who witnessed this spectacle, would neither bend his knees, nor give any sign of respect. The heathen looked upon this as a great insult offered to the goddess, and they accused him before Heraclius, judge of the city, who asked him who he was and why he had not worshipped the great goddess. "I am a Christian," replied he, "and my name is Symphorian. I pray only to the true God, who reigns in heaven. I will not worship the image of the devil; but, if you give me the permission, I will destroy it." On account of this speech, the Saint was not only regarded as a blasphemer, but also as a rebel, because he had not only defamed the great goddess, but also had disobeyed the imperial order, according to which all subjects of the empire were bound to worship the gods. Heraclius, after censuring his speech severely, threatened to torture him most cruelly, if he should persevere in refusing to obey the Emperor's command. Symphorian, representing to the judge the nothingness of his gods, said in answer to his menaces: "I fear only the omnipotent God, who created me, and Him only will I serve. You have my body in your power for a short space of time; but you have not my soul." The judge, not willing to dispute with the fearless Confessor of Christ, ordered him to be beheaded, after he had been tortured in different ways. Symphorian evinced great joy at this sentence; and as he was led to the place of execution, his pious mother called to him: "My son, Symphorian, think of the eternal life. Look up to heaven and remember who reigns there. They cannot take thy life, but only change it into a better one. From this world thou wilt go to a world of never-ending bliss." This exhortation of his mother sank deeply into Symphorian's heart and he went rejoicingly to the place where he was to receive the crown of martyrdom. On arriving there, he fell upon his knees, thanked God for the grace of being permitted to die for His sake, and received his death-stroke without faltering.

On the place, where his holy body was buried, a magnificent Church was afterwards erected. The heathens themselves witnessed many miracles which were wrought by the intercession of St. Symphorian.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. You admire, without doubt, these three martyrs for worshipping only the true God, and for suffering neither torment nor death to change them. You despise the blindness of the heathen who regarded an image made by man, or some other miserable creature, as a god. Why then have you so often turned away from God, even without the danger of torment or death? Why have you so often followed the example of the heathen in their blindness, by honoring a human creature like an idol, and being more anxious to please it, than the Lord your God? The holy Apostle says of the pagans and of those who are like pagans, that their stomach is their God, or that they regard it as their God; because all their thoughts are bent to please it by gluttony; and because they are more anxious to satisfy their stomach, than the Almighty. Yes, they even transgress the laws of God and the church without all fear, in order to refuse nothing to their stomach. The same may be said of other sins; for, according to the words of St. Isidore, each mortal sin belongs in a certain degree, to idolatry; as a sinner, by despising or forsaking the true God, selects something temporal, which he prefers to the Almighty. "That which one loves more than God, that which he prefers to Him," says Origen, "the same is his God." Hence, according to this teacher, a sinner cannot say to the true God: "Thou art my God!" for, his God is his stomach, or money, or empty honor, or sensual pleasures. How much wicked-

ness, therefore, must every sin contain! How great a punishment must await the sinner, who leaves the true God in so disgraceful a manner, and who, by his actions, denies Him! Guard yourself against such idolatry. Be constant to the true, the only God, and forsake Him not for temporal honors, for a trifling gain, an infamous pleasure, or for love of any human being. Endeavor to be able to say to the Lord with truth: "My Lord and my God! My God and my all!" But who is it that can truthfully say this? St. Jerome says: "He whose heart is not swayed by sin."

II. "I fear only the omnipotent God, who has created me," said St. Symphorian. He did not fear the tyrant; nor could any threats prevail upon him to worship the false gods. He feared God alone; hence he would rather suffer martyrdom than offend Him. You have reason to fear God; for, He is your Judge, who has power to condemn you for all eternity. You cannot oppose Him. You have reason to fear only Him, and to fear Him much more than all human beings, because He can punish you much more than all human beings. He can cast your soul and body, for all eternity, into hell, which the power of all men united would be unable to do. All mankind cannot shield you from His wrath; He alone can save you from the wickedness of men and of evil spirits. Hence, fear God, fear Him alone, and fear Him more than all men. But if you really fear the Almighty, take care not to offend Him; and if you have

offended Him, endeavor to reconcile yourself to Him, without loss of time, by true repentance. This is required of you by the fear of the Lord. If you offend Him without shame, and do not endeavor to reconcile yourself to Him, do not	say that you truly fear Him. "The fear of the Lord hates evil." (Prov. viii.) "Fear God and depart from evil." (Prov. iii.) "Fear God, and keep His commandments." (Eccl. xii.) "The fear of the Lord driveth out sin." (Eccl. i.)
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TWENTY-THIRD DAY OF AUGUST.

ST. PHILIP BENITI, CONFESSOR

St. Philip Beniti was born at Florence, and before his birth the Almighty had revealed to his pious mother, that he would become illustrious for his holiness. It seemed to her that a bright shining light emanated from her, which, spreading more and more, at last illumined the whole world with its rays. This was one of the inducements which led her to neglect nothing that was necessary to form in her son the mind and heart of a Saint. She was still more strengthened in this by the following event. Two Religious of the newly founded order of the Servites came to her house. Philip, at that time only five months old; after looking at them for some moments, said: "Behold the servants of Mary, give alms to them, my mother." All present, greatly surprised at this miracle, concluded rightly that God had ordained a remarkable future for this child. The same might be divined from his entire conduct, while yet but a child: all his actions seemed to be imprinted with the seal of holiness.

Having finished his studies, he was one day thinking about his vocation, and it being the Thursday after Easter, he went into the Chapel of the Servites, which stood on the outskirts of Florence, to attend holy Mass. At the Epistle were read the words of the Holy Ghost to St. Philip: "Draw near, and join thyself to the chariot." Having heard these words, he went into an ecstasy, and it seemed to him that he was alone in a vast wilderness, where nothing was to be seen but sterile mountains, steep rocks and cliffs, or marshes overgrown with thorns, swarming with poisonous reptiles, and full of snares. He screamed with fear, and looking around how to save himself, he saw, high in the air, the Blessed Virgin in a chariot, surrounded by Angels and Saints, and holding in her hand the habit of the Servites. At the same time, he heard from the lips of Mary the words which had just been read in the Epistle. "Draw near, and join

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thymself to the Chariot." After this revelation, Philip no longer doubted that he was called to enter the order of the Servites, and going, the following day, to the dwelling of the seven founders of this order, he desired to be received as a lay-brother. He was readily accepted, but after having served in that capacity a few years, his talent, knowledge and holiness were so manifest, that he was made priest : after which he was raised from one dignity to another, until he was at last made General of the entire order. Although he at first humbly opposed this choice, yet when forced to obey, he became zealous in his labors to disseminate the principles of the holy Order, whose object is to reverence the Blessed Virgin and to promote her honor. He sent some of the religious to Scythia, to preach the Gospel and to spread the veneration of the Blessed Virgin. He himself with two companions went through an incredible number of cities and provinces, everywhere exhorting sinners to repentance, endeavoring to calm the contentions which at that period disturbed the Christian world, disabusing by his sermons those who refused obedience to the Pope, and animating all to greater love of God and devotion to the Blessed Virgin. The Lord aided him visibly in all his undertakings, and obtained for him the highest regard from both clergy and laity. When the Cardinals, assembled at Viterbo to elect a new Pope, were unable to agree, they at length unanimously chose Philip, as all deemed him worthy of this high dignity. Philip, informed of it, was terrified and fled into the desert of Mount Thuniat, where he remained concealed in a cavern, until another was elected Pope : which was not less an evidence of his humility, than his election had been of the high regard in which his virtues and the many miracles he had performed were held by the Prelates of the Church. His innocence and purity he carried unspotted to the grave, but in order to preserve them he was very severe to himself. He possessed in an eminent degree, the spirit of prayer ; for, besides occupying a great portion of the night in devotional exercises, he also raised his mind to God, during his various occupations, by means of short aspirations. He never undertook anything without first recommending it in prayer to God, and the more important the affair, the longer and more fervent were his prayers. The only object of his many and laborious voyages was the glory of God and the good of men, and his constant endeavor was to prevent offences of the Divine Majesty and to work for the salvation of souls. But how shall we express his tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin, whom he had loved and honored as a mother from his earliest childhood ? In her honor while yet a youth, he kept several festivals and performed many prayers,

and he entered the Order of the Servites, because they regarded it their duty to promote her veneration and honor. In every sermon, he admonished the people to honor Mary and to call upon her in all their troubles. In a word, he neglected nothing which he deemed necessary or useful to institute and disseminate due devotion to the Queen of Heaven. Although in many places, he had to endure much hardship and persecution, his love of God and the Blessed Virgin could not be discouraged from continuing in his apostolic labors. Meanwhile, the weakness of his body manifested plainly that his last hour was approaching. He therefore went to his convent at Todi, and there first visited the Church. He prostrated himself before the Altar, and when, after a long and fervent prayer, he again rose, he said: "Lord, receive my thanks; here is my place of rest." On the festival of the Assumption of Our Lady, he preached his last sermon with such eloquence and unction, that all his listeners were greatly moved. On leaving the pulpit, he was seized with a fever, which, although by others thought of no consequence, was regarded by himself as a messenger of death. Hence, he had himself carried into a special apartment and laid down; but could not be persuaded to divest himself of the rough hair-shirt which he constantly wore. The days that he remained on earth after this, he employed in instructing and exhorting his religious, in prayers to God, and invoking the intercession of the Blessed Virgin; in repenting of his sins and in longing to be admitted to the presence of the Most High. After having received, with great devotion, the holy Sacraments, he requested his brethren to say the litany of the Saints. When they came to the words: "We sinners; we beseech Thee to hear us!" he fell into an ecstasy, and lost his consciousness to such a degree that he seemed already to have expired. In this state he remained for three hours, when one of his friends loudly called him. He awakened as if from a deep slumber, and related how fearful a struggle he had had with Satan; how the latter had reproached him with his sins, and endeavored to make him despair of the mercy of God. But when the combat was at its height, the Blessed Virgin had appeared to him, and, driving away Satan, had not only saved him from all danger, but had also shown him the crown which awaited him in the other world. Having related this to those around him, who were all awestruck, he requested what he called "his book," the Crucifix, and pressing it to his heart, he intoned the hymn of praise of St. Zachary, and after it, the 30th Psalm: "In thee, O Lord, have I hoped!" Arriving at the words: "Into thy hands I commend my spirit," he looked once again at the Crucifix, and ended his holy and

useful life, on the octave of our Lady's Assumption, in the year 1285. The biography of this Saint contains many miracles which he performed during his life, and many more which took place, by his intercession, after his happy death.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Philip Beniti was tried before his end by a great struggle. Satan reproached him with his sins, although they had been small and had been long since repented of, thus endeavoring to drive him to despair. If this happened to the green wood, what will be done with that which is dry? What combat will be in store for sinners, who during their lives, unheedingly committed iniquities, not troubling themselves about penance? If Satan thus alarmed St. Philip by recalling to him his small sins, how will he terrify those to whom he can point out great sins and perhaps sins not well confessed? If Satan dared to endeavor to cause despair in so holy a man, how much more will he tempt him, who, during his life, has so often and so wantonly offended the Almighty, and who has drunk sin like water! Ah! be careful, oh sinner! and learn not to believe Satan. When he tempts you to do wrong, he represents everything as very easy; he says nothing of the greatness of sin. He speaks to you of the mercy of God, saying: "You can confess it. God is merciful. He will forgive you." Consider it well; by representing to you the mercy of God, he tempts you to sin; but in the hour of your death, he turns that very mercy against you. Then he represents the greatness of your sin and the strict justice of God, in

order to fill your soul with despair. Hence, do not believe him now. Place before your eyes at present the greatness of sin and the justice of the Almighty, that you may avoid evil, or, if you have become guilty of it, that you may do penance. If you do this now, you may in your last hour, comfort yourself with the thought of the Divine mercy. "Never trust thine enemy." (Eccl. xii.)

II. St. Philip Beniti was visibly aided in his great struggle by the Divine mother, who drove Satan away, and showed to the dying Saint the crown that awaited him in heaven. Thus did the most loving mother recompense the devotion of her faithful servant. If you wish to receive her aid, honor her with true filial devotion. Ask her frequently and fervently to obtain from God the grace to combat valiantly the temptations of Satan now, as well as at the hour of your death. She will hear your prayers and will assist you. The evil spirits, who fear the name of Mary, will flee from you. "The spirits of hell," says the pious Thomas à Kempis, "fear the Queen of heaven and flee as soon as they hear her name." St. Bonaventure writes: "Visible enemies fear not a well drilled army, so much as the evil spirits fear the name of Mary."

TWENTY-FOURTH DAY OF AUGUST.

ST. BARTHOLOMEW, APOSTLE.

The Gospel gives us no other account of St. Bartholomew, than that he was joined by our Saviour to those men whom He called as Apostles, and chose to convert mankind. Hence, with the others, he followed the Divine Teacher, and learned from Him the doctrine which he afterwards preached to the nations. The life of this saint, after the ascension of Christ, is described by authentic writers as follows. When the Holy Apostles, after the Holy Ghost had descended upon them, dispersed to preach the gospel to the whole world, St. Bartholomew was sent into East India and the neighboring countries. He repaired thither, not without great hardship, and wandering through cities and villages, he everywhere converted great numbers of the heathen. Having provided all these places with priests, he journeyed to Greater Armenia. Arriving at the capital of this state, he repaired first to the grand temple of the idol Asteroth, where he found a great many blind, deaf, lame, and otherwise disabled persons, who were praying to this god to restore their health. Some were helped, others not. The devil, as he afterwards confessed, at the command of St. Bartholomew, had first, by witchcraft or other means, made these persons blind, deaf, or lame, and when they sought help in his temple, he destroyed the spell cast upon them, or used natural means to restore their health, while they believed that their god had helped them. Satan used also to speak by the image of this idol, and reply to those who questioned him. From the moment, however, when the Holy Apostle entered the temple, the devil had become silent, and answered not a word. To the Armenians, this silence was incomprehensible; hence they asked the idol of another temple the reason of it. Satan, by the mouth of the image, said that Bartholomew, an Apostle of the true God, was the cause of it, and that the same would happen to him as soon as this Apostle should come into his temple. The idolatrous priest desired to know who this Apostle was, and by what means they could recognize him. Satan described him most minutely, adding that he prayed a hundred times during the day and as many times during the night. They immediately sought for St. Bartholomew, and found him just after he had delivered a man possessed of the devil; for Satan cried with a loud voice,

that he was tormented by the prayers of St. Bartholomew, and forced to give way. After the idolaters had thus become acquainted with the Saint, they began to deliberate what they should do with him. Meanwhile, Polymius, the king, whose daughter was also possessed by the Evil One, and who had heard of the deliverance of the one mentioned above, sent to the Apostle, humbly requesting him to come and free his daughter in a like manner. Bartholomew said a short prayer, after which he commanded Satan, in the name of Jesus Christ, to leave the body of the possessed, which was instantly done. The joy of the king and the whole court, and the astonishment of the people of the city, were indescribably great. The king, to show his gratitude to the Saint, offered him a large sum of money and many other presents. St. Bartholomew accepted nothing, saying: "I am not here to seek gold and silver, but to convert the people, and lead souls to the knowledge of the true faith and to heaven." After this he began to speak to the king and courtiers of the only true God, and explained to them how the only-begotten Son of God, by His sufferings and death, had redeemed the world. He told them fearlessly, that the gods which they all worshipped were false gods, nay, nothing but spirits of hell, and to prove this he proposed to force the devil himself, who until now had spoken to them through the idol, publicly to confess the same. The king, went on the following day, with all his courtiers, to the temple. St. Bartholomew came also, and asked the idol Asteroth, in the name of Jesus Christ, to say who he was. The devil began to lament and to howl, but at last, forced by the divine power, confessed that he was one of the spirits of hell, who had, until then, wickedly deceived the king and the people. He said further, that there was only one true God, who was He whom St. Bartholomew, His Apostle, preached and adored. All present looked at each other and knew not what to think or what to say. The holy Apostle then commanded the devil to leave the idols, and destroy them all, without exception, throughout the whole city. The devil obeyed, and the idols of the city fell from their altars and were dashed to pieces. This sufficed to convince the king that St. Bartholomew was a proclaimer of the truth, and after being instructed in the Christian faith, he and his wife and children were baptized. The example of the king was followed by the whole court, and by most of the inhabitants of the capital; and not long after the twelve principal cities of the state became converted to Christianity. To preserve so large a number of faithful in the church, St. Bartholomew ordained many priests, and appointed them to take charge of the new converts.

This glorious victory of the gospel left only the idolatrous

priests stubborn in their error, and as, after the downfall of their idols, they were despised and derided, they thought of means to revenge themselves on the holy Apostle. And when many plans had failed, they turned their eyes upon Astyages, a brother of King Polymius, who reigned over the other part of Armenia, and accused St. Bartholomew before him as an enemy and disturber of the land, who had even succeeded in seducing the king and the whole court, and who was intent upon entirely exterminating the ancient worship of the gods. Astyages, in whose weak mind idolatry had taken deep root, resolved to avenge the wrong which had been done to the gods. He called the holy Apostle to his court under the pretext of hearing his instructions. No sooner, however, had the holy man made his appearance, than the tyrant threatened him with the most cruel torments and the most terrible death, if he did not immediately sacrifice to the gods. St. Bartholomew endeavored to convince him of the nothingness of his gods, but the tyrant would not listen, and commanded the executioners to seize the Saint, and tear the skin from his whole body, and thus slowly put him to death. The order was executed, and the holy Apostle was flayed alive. During this inhuman torture the Saint ceased not to praise God and to proclaim the true faith. God preserved his life miraculously until the skin was torn from his whole body, and as he still continued to declare the true God, the tyrant had him beheaded. The Almighty, however, visibly punished the king and the idolatrous priests, who had instigated this fearful cruelty. They all became possessed of the Evil One, and after having been tormented by him for thirty days, they were strangled. The holy body of the Martyr was placed by the Christians in a leaden coffin, and was buried with all due honors. In the course of time the pagans cast the leaden coffin with the relics of St. Bartholomew into the sea; but the waves miraculously supported it and carried it to the island of Lipari, the Christian inhabitants of which received the sacred deposit with joy, and placed it in a church erected for the purpose. Thence this sacred treasure was brought to Benevento, and finally, in the reign of Otho II., it was transported to Rome, where it is kept at this day in great honor.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. Bartholomew, the holy Apostle, threw himself on his knees a hundred times during the day, and as often at night, to pray to the Almighty. An Apostle found leisure for this, though overburdened with</p>	<p>work and assured of divine aid in all his undertakings. You have not so much work, neither are you assured of divine aid, and yet you seldom take refuge in prayer to the Almighty. What is the reason of</p>
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this? You are perhaps, one of those negligent persons, who do not even think of their morning and evening prayers, but like dumb brutes rise and lie down again. Of course, it never comes into your mind to pray during the day. Do you call that, I will not say, a Christian, but even a rational life? Will you go on in this manner? I do not require of you to bend your knees a hundred times during the day and night, but I advise you to pray more frequently and more devoutly than you have done heretofore. Before all things, do not omit to turn your thoughts to heaven, morning and evening, if only for one short prayer. If ever you omit to do this, let it be on those days when you need no benefits from the Almighty. But when will such a day dawn? Surely, never as long as you live; for there is no day in which neither your soul nor your body may be exposed to such dangers as to require the assistance of the Most High. Hence it is no more than your duty to pray in the morning most fervently for this divine assistance. And as no day passes on which the Almighty bestows no grace on you either in soul or body, it is therefore no less your duty at the close of the day to offer Him your grateful thanks. During the night, you are as little secure from the persecutions of the evil one, and of wicked men, as during the day; hence, you need God's protection at night as well as in the day. But how can you expect this aid, if you do not even ask for it? "We rise in the morning," says St. Chrysostom, "and know not what may happen to us through the day; we live surrounded by danger: why then, do we not call on God for help?" Let it at least be done morning and night, and also during the day, while you are at your work. Hear the words of

St. Lawrence Justinian: "Nothing is so powerful to overcome the rage of our enemies as continual prayer. But as other affairs do not permit us to pray continually, we ought to pray during our work. He who is occupied with good works, prays to God with a loud voice, though his tongue is silent. We ought, nevertheless, to endeavor, before we begin our day's labor, to send a prayer on high. For, as a soldier without his weapons dares not enter the field of battle, so a Christian should begin nothing without arming himself with prayer. When going out and returning home, prayer should accompany him. He should not lie down to rest before having recommended himself, soul and body, to the Almighty."

II. St. Bartholomew rather suffered himself to be flayed than offend God by sacrificing to an idol. The martyrdom was inhuman, the pain inexpressibly great. But all this had an end; all was soon over. Had he acted differently, had he offended God, he would have escaped this dreadful torture, but he would now be suffering much greater pains, and such as never end; as the tyrant and those idolatrous priests suffer, who were the cause of his martyrdom. They were tormented during thirty days on earth, and after that, they have suffered in hell until now, and will suffer for all eternity. Hence, tell me, if you had to suffer, either with the holy Apostle, or with the idolatrous priests and the tyrant, with whom would you rather share the pains? I believe that you would certainly prefer to be flayed with St. Bartholomew; for, his sufferings, although so terrible, ended, and, in comparison with the pains of hell, were but very trifling. I ask you further: why then have you so frequently offended God when you had not to fear torments?

Why have you voluntarily placed yourself in danger of being cast forever into the torments of hell? Ah! you cannot have considered the pains, the torments which attend the sinner in hell! Think seriously of it in future, and you will not sin, and will therefore escape hell. To think frequently of hell, is a powerful means to escape it; and to forget it, casts many into the whirlpool of sin, and thence into hell. St. Chrysostom writes of the rich man as follows: "If this man had thought of the fire of hell, he would never have sinned: but never calling it to mind, he sinned, and thus was cast into the flames." Hence I advise you to think often of hell.

TWENTY-FIFTH DAY OF AUGUST.

ST. LOUIS, KING OF FRANCE.

Louis IX., King of France, a perfect model of virtue to all princes, was born at Poissy, in 1215. Having early lost his father, Louis VIII., his mother, Blanche, a matron celebrated for her virtues and great mind, had him anointed king, when he was hardly twelve years old. Important reasons induced her to this step, although she remained regent during the king's minority. To this pious queen and mother St. Louis was greatly indebted for his piety; for, she led him in the path of true fidelity to God, knowing that the welfare of the whole land depended upon it. In the first years of his childhood she instilled into his mind the fear of the Lord and a great aversion for sin, by saying to him: "Beloved child, I would rather see thee in thine innocence fall dead at my feet, than that thou shouldst ever commit a mortal sin." These words Louis engraved so deeply into his heart, that he always abhorred sin more than all other evils, which is sufficiently illustrated by the fact that, according to the testimonials of his confessors, he never stained his soul with a mortal sin. The same fear he endeavored to impress upon others. One day, seeing a man afflicted with leprosy, he asked one of his courtiers whether he would rather suffer this disease or commit a mortal sin. The courtier having answered that he would rather have a hundred mortal sins on his soul than leprosy on his body, the holy king was indignant, and replied: "Truly, you do not understand what it means to be in disgrace with the Almighty. Learn that a mortal sin is more to be dreaded than all the evils on earth." Equal to his fear of sin was his zeal in performing good deeds and practising Christian virtues. He daily attended holy Mass, and always with the greatest devotion,

and he never suffered any levity at church, in his courtiers or domestics. He appointed certain hours during the day for prayers. The grace of holy baptism and of the Christian faith he esteemed more highly than his crown. To be a Christian was for him a higher title than to be king of France; hence he generally called himself Louis of Poissy, because he had been baptised in that city. His faith was so well established, that when he was one day informed that Christ was visible in the Blessed Eucharist, in the form of a lovely child, he answered: "I believe that Christ, our Lord, is present in the Blessed Eucharist, and so firm is this my belief, that I need not see Him with my eyes." To holy relics he showed great honor: hence, when the Emperor Constantine presented to him the crown of thorns of our Saviour, he went, with his whole court and all the clergy, five miles to meet it, and then accompanied it with great devotion to Paris. He carried the holy treasure, barefoot and with uncovered head, to the Cathedral of Notre Dame, and thence into the chapel of St. Nicholas, where it was deposited with all due reverence. Towards himself he showed an austerity hardly surpassed in the convents. He wore, almost constantly, a rough hair-shirt, fasted every Friday and during the whole of Advent. He never permitted himself a dispensation in Lent. Before his fifteenth year, he was very fond of hunting, fishing, and other harmless amusements, but afterwards he renounced them all, in order to give all his time to prayer and the care of his government. His love for the poor was so great, that he not only gave them large alms, but also visited them in their sickness, washed the feet of some every Saturday, fed daily 120 in his palace, and always entertained three of them at his own table, serving them with his own hands. Some of his courtiers maintained that this was not suitable for a king; but he replied: "I recognize and honor in the poor, Christ Himself, who has said: "What you do to the least of them you have done to Me." On another occasion, he said: "The poor must gain heaven by their patience, the rich, by giving alms." He built many asylums and other houses for the maintenance of the poor, and erected a still larger number of churches and convents for the honor of God and the salvation of souls.

But as St. Louis thus proved himself a pious king, so also he showed himself a worthy ruler, by being indefatigable where the welfare of his people, or where justice and the protection of the church were concerned. He made laws and ordinances commanding all officials of the State to deal justice without any delay and to take all possible care of his subjects. Those who disobeyed these laws were severely punished. He appointed

two days in the week on which every body, even the lowest and poorest had free admittance to him and could bring him his complaints. He labored especially to uproot those vices which prevent the blessing of God, and call down the Divine wrath upon a land. Hence he ordained by law that blasphemers should be branded by the public executioner, and when, one day, his pardon was asked for a nobleman who had been guilty of this crime, the holy king refused it, saying: "I would let my own lips be pierced with a red hot iron, if, by this means, I could prevent all blasphemy in my domains." His valor in war was as great as his zeal for justice and his endeavors to destroy all vice. The whole world had, in this pious and heroic king, a proof that piety and valor can well be united in the human heart. Over the Albigenses, the most bitter enemies of the State and Church, he gained a decisive victory, completely vanquishing them. Some rebellious subjects, who had made war against him when he first ascended the throne, and who were aided by a foreign power, were conquered and brought again under his sceptre. These and many other victories made him greatly esteemed and respected by all foreign monarchs.

But nothing more effectually proves the great zeal of this holy king for the true church, than the crusades which he undertook to recover the Holy Land and to assist the oppressed Christians who lived in it. His first expedition, at the outset, promised great success, but in the course of time, by the inscrutable decrees of Providence, the greater part of his army fell victims to disease, and the holy king himself was taken prisoner. In this misfortune, his patience was so great and heroic, that even his enemies admired it. He submitted, without any complaint, to the Divine will, and continued his prayers, fasts and pious exercises, as if he were in his palace at Paris. He was at length released on payment of a ransom of 800,000 ducats, and the surrender of the cities he had taken. He thus concluded a truce of ten years with the Saracens. Having, under these conditions obtained his liberty, he remained some time longer in the Holy Land, visited with great devotion, the places made sacred by the presence of our Saviour, ransomed many prisoners, gave abundant alms, and fortified the few cities that remained in the hands of the Christians.

Meanwhile the holy queen, Blanche, his mother, died at Paris, and when the news reached the Saint, he returned at once to France. Some years later, when it was reported that the Christians in the East were more oppressed than ever by the infidels, he resolved to undertake a second crusade to assist them. At first, success followed the king's army, but the great

heat of the climate, the want of wholesome water and provisions, infected the whole army with an epidemic, so that a large number died, among whom was a son of the king. At last, St. Louis himself was seized with the disease, and without being disturbed by it, he prepared himself for his last hour by prayer and by devoutly receiving the holy Sacraments. After this he gave to the Crown Prince, who was with him, instructions, partly verbal, partly in writing, which were dictated by Christian and royal wisdom, and which will be given below. After this he desired to dispense with all worldly affairs, and to occupy himself only with God, to whose holy will he had entirely submitted. When his last hour had come, he desired to be robed in a penitential garment, and to be laid on a bed strewn with ashes. When this had been done, he took the Crucifix, kissed it most devoutly, and continued in prayer and acts of devotion, until he calmly expired, in the year of our Lord 1270, in the fifty-sixth year of his age. His last words were those of the Psalmist: "Lord, I will enter into Thy house: I will adore Thee in Thy holy temple, and will give glory to Thy name." Thus did St. Louis pass from a temporal into an eternal kingdom. Truly, he had been a great and holy king; great, on account of his valor in war; still greater, for his Christian magnanimity in adversity, but greatest, for the many exalted virtues by which he shone before the whole world from his childhood to the last hour of his life, and which prevented him from ever committing a mortal sin.

The instructions which he gave to the heir of his crown, and which he had constantly observed himself, testify his great holiness. They are as follows:

1. Love God, the Almighty, above everything.
2. Flee sin more quickly than you would a serpent.
3. Become not fainthearted in adversity.
4. Become not elevated in the days of prosperity.
5. Show the wounds of your soul frequently to your spiritual physician, and refuse no remedies, however bitter, to heal them.
6. Pray diligently.
7. Be compassionate and generous to the poor.
8. If your mind is harassed with doubt, consult a devout man.
9. Keep faithful and pious counsellors around you, and dismiss those who are wicked.
10. All that is good hold fast: all that is bad discard.
11. Lend a willing ear to those who speak of God.
12. Listen not to calumniators and slanderers.

13. So long as you reign, leave not unpunished those who blaspheme God and the Saints.
 14. First be grateful to God, then to men.
 15. Love and protect justice, and neither neglect nor despise the complaints of the needy.
 16. In your own affairs, when they are not perfectly clear, speak and act against yourself.
 17. Refund immediately the possessions of others.
 18. Protect the clergy.
 19. Love and honor your parents.
 20. If you are obliged to war against Christians, spare the churches and the convents.
 21. Endeavor to terminate all contentions with kindness.
 22. Guard all your officials with a watchful eye.
 23. Ever show due reverence to the Pope.
 24. Overstep not the bounds of moderation in your expenses.
 25. When I have departed, let prayers and Masses be said for the repose of my soul.
- These were the last admonitions of the holy king.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

How many glorious examples of the most noble virtues are to be found in the life of this admirable king! Consider them well and endeavor to imitate some of them; especially, his reverence in Church, his devotion in attending Holy Mass, his great esteem for the true faith, his firm belief in the presence of the Lord in the most Holy Sacrament, his continual zeal in prayer, his veneration for holy relics, his penance, his exactness in observing the fasts, his generous charity to the poor and prisoners, his zeal for the honor of God, manifested by the founding of Churches and convents, by the uprooting of vice, and by his protection of the true faith. Consider also his invincible patience in adversity, his perfect resignation to the Divine will, in the many unfortunate events of his life, and finally his holy preparation to leave this world. All these are examples which

may serve to cover you with confusion, as well as to excite you to emulation. Of all these points, however, I will only place two more particularly before your eyes.

I. "You do not understand what it is to be in disfavor with God. Learn that a mortal sin is more to be feared than all the evils of the world;" said the holy king. Recognize from this the perfect perception and horror that St. Louis had of sin. For this he was indebted to his holy mother, who had repeatedly said to him, that she would rather see him dead than polluted by a mortal sin; by which she desired to say, that sin was more to be feared than death. Oh! that all parents would impress this truth on the hearts of their children! But most people do not or will not comprehend the amount of wickedness that a single sin contains. And yet it is certain that sin is a

greater evil than all others in this world ; for, there is none that can so hurt us in soul and body as this. Should we lose nothing by sin but the friendship and favor of God, this alone ought to be sufficient to restrain us from committing it. Perhaps you do not regard this, because you do not understand what it is to be in disfavor with the Great God, or to have Him for an enemy. Surely, the greatest unhappiness of the damned is, that they have God as an enemy ; for, this is the source of all their other misery. Why are you so little concerned about being in disgrace with God ? Why do you draw His displeasure upon yourself so frivolously by committing great iniquities ? Why do you remain in this state of disfavor so long, without any effort to reconcile yourself with God ? Pray fervently to the Almighty, to give you a right perception of the wickedness of sin, as this perception will soon be followed by hatred of it and by penance.

II. In early youth the holy king was fond of hunting and fishing, and going to plays ; but after his fifteenth year he refrained from these amusements, which he might have enjoyed without offending heaven, and sacrificed them to the

Almighty. The holy Fathers regard the sacrifice which king David made to God, when he refused to appease his thirst with water that was brought to him from the cistern at Bethlehem, as more precious than many other sacrifices and victories with which this holy king had honored the Most High. Just so highly ought the act of St. Louis to be esteemed. He could have enjoyed these entertainments without sin ; but he conquered himself, and, actuated by holy intentions, he refrained from them. In this manner, all true servants of God, all true penitents should act. They should not only refrain from unlawful pleasures, but also from such as are innocent, and thus offer to God a pleasing sacrifice. You have surely many opportunities, though perhaps only in small things, to make such sacrifices : do not let them pass without making use of them. You have more reason to do this than the holy king, as by committing sin you have sought and tasted unlawful pleasures. "Whoever remembers," says St. Gregory, "that he has tasted unlawful pleasures, should sometimes abstain from those permitted to him, in order to give, at least in part, satisfaction to his Creator."

TWENTY-SIXTH DAY OF AUGUST.

ST. GENESIUS, MARTYR.

At the time of the Emperor Dioclesian, the world renowned enemy of the Christians, there lived at Rome a celebrated pagan actor and juggler, named Genesius. His conduct was licentious and insolent. He hated the Christians most profoundly, and was devoted, heart and soul, to idolatry. Knowing that he could not please the Emperor better than by ridiculing the

Christians, and by shamelessly imitating all their mysteries, he resolved, one day, to represent baptism, with all its ceremonies, as ludicrously as possible. To this effect he made himself well acquainted with all that takes place at holy baptism, appointed the parts, and explained to those who were to act, what they were to do. It was his ambition to make this holy sacrament as contemptible as was in his power. The day of representation came; the Emperor, his whole court, and a great many people were present. The comedy began; Genesius acted the principal part. Feigning to be sick, he lay down, calling to his friends to bring him something to relieve his suffering. When they had done as he requested, he said that as he felt he had soon to die, he would become a Christian, and they should baptize him. Everything was brought upon the stage that was used at baptism, and all the questions were put to him which are made to those who are to be baptized. In fact, the entire ceremony was performed, but in so ludicrous a manner, that the Emperor and all the people shouted with laughter. But, oh! incomprehensible prodigy! oh! great mercy of God! At the moment when the wanton pagan actors scoffed and blasphemed the holy sacrament of the true Church, the Almighty touched the heart of Genesius and illumined it with a ray of His divine compassion. Suddenly, an entire change took place in the actor, and he loudly and earnestly proclaimed himself a Christian. His companions, not knowing what had happened, continued the blasphemous mockery. When the whole ceremony was performed, they threw over Genesius a white robe in derision of the garment usually given to the newly-converted and baptized, and thus clothed they presented him to the people amidst great hilarity. But Genesius, already a true believer in Christ, turned to the Emperor and other spectators, and confessed, with great dignity, what had taken place within him. He declared solemnly, that until that day, blinded by idolatry, he had scoffed and derided Christianity, and therefore proposed to represent baptism on the stage, for the amusement of the people. During the sacrilegious performance, his heart had suddenly changed and, desiring to become a Christian, he had received baptism with this desire. He said that he had seen the heavens open, and perceived a hand that touched him, when the baptismal water was poured over him. He further stated that before they had baptized him, he had seen an angel, with a book in which all his past iniquities had been recorded, who assured him that they would all be washed away by holy baptism, and that, in fact, he had, after the ceremony, seen that all his vices had been obliterated from its pages. After relating this, he added that he re-

nounced idolatry, and believing that Jesus Christ was the son of the Almighty, and the Redeemer of the world, he would, henceforth, live and die a Christian. In conclusion, he exhorted the Emperor and all present, to follow his example and worship the only true God. They all thought, at first, that Genesius was jesting, but when they perceived that he was in earnest, the Emperor became enraged at his noble and frank confession, and gave immediate orders that his garments should be torn from him, and that he should be whipped with scourges and clubs, before all the people, and then be cast into prison. Plautian, the prefect, received orders to renew this punishment daily, until Genesius would abandon his new faith. The first order was executed without delay, and Plautian was only too punctual in the accomplishment of the second. The holy confessor was stretched upon the rack, torn with iron hooks, and burned with torches. "Miserable man!" called the Prefect to him, while he was thus suffering, "submit to the imperial command, and sacrifice to the gods, that you may save your life, and find grace." The holy martyr replied: "Your Emperor is but a mortal man; whoever desires the favor of such, may seek it of him. I pray to the immortal King of heaven and earth, and will never forsake Him. I know that He, who received me in holy baptism, is the true King, and I repent for having so often derided and offended Him. I will not obey Dioclesian, whose reign will soon be over, and who will one day become as naught. You may torture me, therefore, as much as you like; I will remain faithful to my God. If you had the power to kill me a hundred times, you would not be able to take Him out of my heart or my mouth." Plautian, provoked at his fearlessness reported his words to the Emperor, who ordered him to beheaded, which sentence was accordingly executed, in the year of our Lord 303; and thus St. Genesius, who from an idolater, had become a Christian, and from a scoffer of Christianity, a fearless confessor of the Saviour, received the crown of martyrdom.

The Roman Martyrology mentions another Genesius, born at Arles in France, who, at first a soldier, became afterwards a public notary, and, was one day, ordered to write an edict against the Christians. Although a heathen at that time, he recognized the injustice of the act, and refused to transcribe it. Being urged to obey, he threw away his writing-tablet, confessed himself a Christian, and willing rather to lose his office, and even his life, as a follower of the Saviour, than to become guilty before God by writing so unjust an order. This heroic resolution cost him his temporal life, but insured him an eternal happiness.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. How wonderful is the Almighty in the conversion of even the greatest sinner : how merciful even towards those who have bitterly offended Him ! At the moment in which Genesius roused His just wrath, by making a ridiculous sport of holy baptism, He changed his heart, and turned him into a valiant defender of the Christian faith, and soon after, into a glorious martyr. Hence, if you see a great sinner, do not despise him. Who knows if he may not, one day, become a fervent penitent, a great Saint ? The hand of the Lord, who changed a publican into an Apostle, a persecutor of the Church into one of her protectors, and a scoffer into a martyr, has lost none of its power. He is able to save the greatest sinner. How merciful is He at the same time ! Genesius deserved for his sacrilegious scoffing to die a sudden death and be precipitated into the lowest depth of hell. God did not act on him according to his deserts, but spared him from the merited punishment and gave him the grace to recognize his fault and to wipe it away with his blood. Have not you also experienced equal mercy at the hands of the Almighty ? Behold at the very moment when you offended Him, you deserved to die in your sin, and thus be lost forever. God spared you. What God showed you this mercy ? The same whom you had so greatly offended. He gave you time and opportunity to do penance. He exhorted you to do penance, not as if it were of any benefit to Him, but because He is merciful and loves you. Sink on your knees and give thanks to Him for so incomprehensible a kindness. "A thousand times," said the penitent Augustine, "a thousand times couldst Thou most

justly have condemned me, if Thou hadst been willing to do so. Thou hast not done it, because Thou lovest my soul." Say the same for yourself, and confess that a God so merciful deserves that you should not offend Him again.

II. Genesius profited by the knowledge which God had given him, and also by the time and grace bestowed upon him by divine mercy. He repented of his fault and atoned for it by a public confession of the Christian faith, from which not even death could divide him. How do you profit by the knowledge God has given you ? how by the time ? how by the grace ? Do you coöperate with this grace ? do you use the time for penance ? do you correct the faults you have committed ? are you constant in your reform ? Wo to you, if you act not thus ! You have reason to fear that God will deprive you of grace, if you do not employ it to your salvation. He will take from you the time and opportunity for doing penance, because you do not spend it for the end for which it was bestowed upon you. The greater the mercy of the Almighty has been to you heretofore, the more severe and terrible will be His justice. The longer God has waited for your conversion, the more painful will be your punishment, if you do not accept His grace. "Do not despise the mercy of God," admonishes St. Augustine, "if you do not wish to become aware of His justice. Measure by the greatness of His mercy, the extent of His justice ; for, the Almighty is infinite in His justice as in His mercy." St. Bernard writes : "The longer God waits for our conversion, the more severely will He punish us if we neglect it."

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY OF AUGUST.

ST. CÆSARIUS, BISHOP OF ARLES.

St. Cæsarius, one of the most famous bishops of France, was born in the territory of Chalons on the Saone. His parents were very distinguished not only on account of their nobility, but also for their blameless lives. When only seven years old, Cæsarius already evinced great love towards the poor, whom he sought to assist by every means in his power. One day, meeting a half naked beggar, he took off his own clothes and gave them to him. He despised all that is temporal, from the moment he became acquainted with the world and its vanities. Hence he went, without the knowledge of his parents, to the bishop, desiring to serve God in the Church. After some time, he retired, with the permission of the bishop, into the monastery at Lerins, as he desired to lead a more perfect life. His piety and his severity towards himself, caused him to be greatly admired by all the monks. The Abbot soon perceived that the health of his fervent young disciple was considerably impaired, and as no remedies had the desired effect, he sent him to his native place for his recovery. The bishop of Arles called him immediately, and with the Abbot's permission, ordained him priest. He then made him Abbot of another monastery, in the suburbs of the city, the functions of which office he administered during several years, to the great satisfaction of all in his charge. When, later, the bishop of Arles became sick and felt that his last hour was approaching, he expressed the wish that Cæsarius might be his successor. This wish was fulfilled; for, no sooner had the bishop expired, than Cæsarius was chosen to fill the vacant see. Although the holy Abbot, in his deep humility, endeavored to evade this honor, and concealed himself for a time in a vault among the tombs, he was soon found and forcibly placed upon the Episcopal throne. When installed in his new dignity, the Saint endeavored to administer the functions which heaven had entrusted to him, with the utmost perfection. He preached daily, sometimes twice in one day, and admonished all, with great energy, to amend their lives, and to walk in the path of the righteous. Every year, he visited all the cities and villages in his diocese, as he desired to instruct the ignorant, comfort the afflicted, and convert the sinners. A true father to the poor, he dismissed none without giving them alms. He used to

say that the income of a bishop was a charitable foundation of the Church for the maintenance of the poor. In the Churches he allowed not the slightest irreverence, either in indecent clothes or in behavior. He defended the Catholic faith most valiantly against the Arians and Pelagians. He also wrote several sermons and instructions, in order that those who could not hear him might be provided by him with means to learn the path leading to heaven. He was present at several Councils, presiding at some, and at all of them he manifested his apostolic zeal for the welfare of the true faith. He insisted also, that all under him should strictly keep the ordinances which these Councils had decreed. This zeal provoked the enmity of some, who were ill-disposed, and who, therefore, conspired against him and sent Licinian, a notary, to the Gothic king, Alaric, to accuse the holy bishop of being in league with the Duke of Burgundy. Alaric, without investigating the case, banished the innocent prelate to Bordeaux. Soon after his arrival there a conflagration broke out in the city, which threatened to destroy it; but when St. Cæsarius, at the request of the inhabitants, prayed to God to spare the people, the flames lost their fury and the fire was extinguished. The holiness of Cæsarius soon made his innocence known, and Alaric, recalling him to his see, intended to punish his false accusers with death, but Cæsarius himself obtained pardon for them. On another occasion, he was accused, almost at the same time, by the Jews and by the Arians, that he had plotted to betray the city of Arles to the French, who were besieging it. The innocent bishop was taken prisoner and sentenced to die. He was about to be cast into the Rhone, when the letter of a Jew was produced, who had promised the besiegers to open one of the gates of the city, on condition that all the Jews should be exempt from pillage. In this manner, the innocence of the bishop was known, and he was released from imprisonment. After the raising of the siege, all the sick, the poor, and the captives flocked around him for help, and he gave all he had to assist them. As, however, this was not sufficient, he spared not the vessels of the Church, but sold them for the maintenance of the needy. This gave the enemies of the holy prelate a new cause of complaint, and they accused him to King Theodoric of having used the treasures of the Church to enrich the enemy. The King called the bishop to Ravenna to justify himself. The holy man, in the consciousness of his innocence, appeared fearless and cheerful, and the King trembled when he looked into his venerable face, and his heart was moved with reverence towards him. Repressing every sign of anger or suspicion, he met him most kindly, and dismissed him with every expression

of the highest regard. Soon after, the holy bishop received, as a mark of the King's esteem, a costly present in silver. The Saint received it gratefully, but sold it and ransomed many captives with the money, which made him rise higher in the King's estimation. To some persons, who said that he spent too much for the prisoners, he answered: "What would you wish, if you had to sigh in captivity? Is it not right that we should do to others, as we would wish others to do to us?"

After the virtue of St. Cæsarius had been sufficiently tried by adversity and suffering, God called him to receive his recompense. A revelation made his approaching end known to him. About the middle of August he fell ill; his pains were great, but his patience was still greater. God granted him, before his death, a foretaste of heavenly joys, by an inner comfort and by divine visions. Having devoutly received the holy sacraments, he ended his holy life amid most pious exercises, in the 74th year of his age.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. What would you wish yourself, if you had to sigh in such captivity?" asked St. Cæsarius of those who blamed him for his mercy towards the prisoners. This is surely a most important question, and it ought to animate every Christian to show himself charitable towards the sick, the poor and those in prison. The sign of a Christian is love towards his neighbor, which Christ announces with the words: "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for the other." (John, xiii.) This love obliges us to do towards our neighbor as we would desire that he should do to us. If you were poor, sick, forsaken by all, or imprisoned, how would you desire that we should act towards you? Answer this yourself, and consider well, that you ought to act in the same manner towards those who are poor, sick, or imprisoned. If you will not do this, say not that you love your neighbor as a Christian is bound to love him. But if

you do, rest assured, that such practical exercise of charity will be very pleasing to the Lord and of great merit to you. The first you may know from the fact, that Christ receives all such works of charity as if they had been done to Himself, as I have told you elsewhere, and He also regards it as refused to Himself, if you deny your assistance to your neighbor. "I was sick, and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to me. As long as you did it unto one of these, my least Brethren, you did it to me. I was sick and in prison, and you did not visit me. As long as you did it not to one of these least, neither did you do it to me." Thus speaks Our Lord, in His description of the last judgment. The second is made clear by the very fact, that these works of charity will be recompensed with an eternal reward, according to the words which Christ will pronounce on the last day; "Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess ye the kingdom prepared

for you from the foundation of the world ; for I was hungry, and you gave me to eat, &c."

II. St. Cæsarius permitted no disrespect in the Churches, no frivolity either in dress or manners, but punished all such offences. He acted rightly ; for, we ought to avoid, especially while at Church, every thing that may in the least displease God. What benefit can we otherwise expect from going to Church ? Have we not, in such case, reason to fear that we shall return from Church with more sins than we were guilty of before, or that the words of St. Ambrose will be true of us : " They go with small sins into Church, and return from it with greater." It is truly inexcusable to offend God in the very place where we ought to reconcile Him to us ; to augment the number of sins, where we seek pardon for those already committed and to deserve new punishment, where we come to be forgiven. Search your conscience, and if you have erred in this, try to reform. Do not laugh, talk, jest, or look curiously about at those sacred moments when all ought to bow their knees before the Almighty. Be not one of those

godless persons who make a play-house, or a market-place of the temple of God, and who discuss their affairs there, give and receive commissions, and who not only do not pray themselves, but disturb others in their devotion. How offensive this must be in the sight of God ! The walls of the Church, dedicated so solemnly to the Most High, the altar, upon which the most Holy Sacrifice is offered to heaven, all these should inspire you with piety. But the children of the world, blind to all that is holy, have eyes only for that which they should least of all seek in a Church. Dare any one say that these are trifles ? If our Lord, in holy wrath, punished those who desecrated the vestibule of the temple by traffic and usury, how will He punish those who dare to desecrate the much more holy and sacred temples of Christianity, by conduct so contrary to all true devotion to the holy Founder of the true faith ? Take care that you yourself do not experience it to your own great damage. " Fear Him," says the holy pope Stephen, " who with a whip made of cords, drove the buyers and sellers out of the Temple."

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY OF AUGUST.

ST. AUGUSTINE, BISHOP AND DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH.

St. Augustine, that great Doctor of the Church, who stands far above all human praise, was born at Tagaste, in Africa, in the year 354. His father, Patricius, was a heathen ; his mother, Monica, a Christian, who is honored as a Saint on the 4th of May. Nature had bestowed upon Augustine the most liberal gifts, and his talents were such as to fit him for the study of all the sciences. He excelled, however, in oratory, to which he early evinced great inclination. His father had educated him in paganism, but his

pious mother endeavored to convert him to Christianity. One day, when suffering excessively from cramps, and supposing that he was about to die, he desired to be baptized ; but no sooner had his pains ceased than he changed his mind. When at Carthage, where he studied rhetoric, he was seduced by the Manichees, and became an adherent to their heresy. From his own account, he spent his early youth in great frivolity, and became so great a slave to impurity, that he feared he never should be able to abstain from it. To this horrible vice he was brought, as he wrote himself, by idleness, gaming, the carelessness of his father, who was not strict enough with him, immoral plays which he frequented, and bad company. His pious mother left nothing undone to correct his conduct ; she exhorted him, and punished him, but her efforts were entirely fruitless. He continued in this life of sin and shame for nine years, during which St. Monica prayed, with floods of tears, to the Almighty, for her son's salvation. God, at length, granted her petition. Augustine began to be displeased with the Manichean heresy, as he perceived it had no foundation. His unchaste life also began to disgust him more and more, and he sought to free himself by changing his residence. He therefore left Carthage, where, after finishing the study of rhetoric, he had taught with great success ; and, against the will of his mother, he went to Rome. There he became dangerously sick, and he attributed his recovery to the prayers of his mother. After having made himself famous in Rome by his eloquence, he was sent, by the Roman prefect Symmachus, to Milan, where the emperor desired to establish an able master of rhetoric. At that period, the holy bishop St. Ambrose, resided at Milan, and was greatly celebrated on account of his holiness and eloquence. Augustine sought his acquaintance, and was often present at his discourses, although it was not from any desire to learn, but simply from curiosity. He desired to become acquainted with the style of the bishop, and to learn whether he truly deserved the great reputation he enjoyed on account of his eloquence. This curiosity, however, led him eventually to the truth ; for, while he intended only to listen to the style in which the Saint expressed himself, he heard, at the same time, how well founded his teachings were, and became thoroughly convinced of the falsity of the Manichean heresy. But notwithstanding this, he could not persuade himself to accept the truth of the Catholic Church ; his unchaste desires barred the way. He admired the pure life of St. Ambrose, but feared his own inability to follow such an example. Meanwhile, St. Monica, induced by pious solicitude for her son, had come to Milan. Repairing to St. Ambrose, she made him acquainted with her son's spiritual con-

dition, and begged him, with tearful eyes, to use all his endeavors to convert him. The holy bishop, deeply touched by the mother's devotion, consoled her with the hope that her son would surely soon come to the knowledge of the ill use he made of his life, and would reform, which opinion of the Saint was verified. Simplician, a venerable and pious monk, one day accidentally related to Augustine, whose mind was in a very unsettled state, that Victorinus, the most celebrated orator at Rome, was as old as he was at that time, when he received holy baptism. Pontician, a friend and compatriot of Augustine, told him one day, of the conversion of two imperial courtiers who, after reading the life of St. Antony, immediately reformed, left the court and retired from the world, to live as hermits in solitude. These, and other facts considerably moved the heart of Augustine, and he began to think of changing his conduct. His reason convinced him of its necessity, but he was restrained by his evil habits. Day after day he formed the resolution to change his life, but imaginary causes withheld him, and he deferred from one time to another. One day, when he had struggled severely with himself, on the one hand, told by evil habit, that it would be impossible for him to live chastely, while on the other, the virtue of chastity pointed to so many chaste youths and maidens, men and widows, saying to him: "And are you not able to do what these and those are doing!" he wept bitterly, and walking into the garden, he sat down under a fig-tree and sighed in deep grief to God; "O Lord, how long? To-morrow, to-morrow? Why do I not at once put an end to this miserable existence?" When, exhausted with the sorrow within his soul, he was thus sitting there, he heard a voice saying to him; "Take up and read! take up and read!" Full of awe, he arose, took up the nearest book, and opening it, he read the words of St. Paul: "Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in revelling and drunkenness, not in chamberings and impurities, not in strife and envy, but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences." It needed no more to calm the storm in Augustine's heart and end his inner strife. His mind was suddenly changed, and he determined, not only to lead a chaste life, but also to abandon heresy and unite himself to the true faith by receiving holy baptism. He immediately imparted his resolution to his pious mother, so devoted to his spiritual welfare, and to St. Ambrose, and after careful preparation, he received holy baptism, on Easter-Eve, in the 33d year of his age. It is believed that the well-known hymn, "We praise Thee, O Lord!" was composed by St. Ambrose and the newly baptized Augustine, and that it was sung on this occasion for the first time, to give thanks to the

Almighty for the grace conferred. The joy of St. Ambrose and of St. Monica, at this conversion, can better be imagined than described. I will only say this; as the pious mother had shed floods of tears, in the bitterness of her sorrow, so she wept tears of joy, when at last the event took place to which she had so long looked forward. Soon after St. Augustine had been baptized, he desired to return to his home, to live only for his salvation. He set out accompanied by his holy mother, who, when they had reached Ostia, became sick and ended her holy life by a happy death. Augustine, after having remained a short time at Rome, continued his voyage and arrived in Africa. He retired to his house in the country and lived there for three years, in solitude and continual prayer, fasting and other penances, and in contemplating the divine mysteries and reading the word of God. A nobleman requested him to go to Hippos, and as it seemed to Augustine to be for a good and holy purpose, he complied. Having been there for some time, he was ordained priest by bishop Valerius, who was well acquainted with his virtue and great knowledge. After his ordination, which, in his deep humility, he long opposed, he founded a monastery and commenced to live a religious life with several other learned men. He wrote rules for them and thus made the beginning of the "Order of St. Augustine" afterwards so highly celebrated in the Church of Christ. After he had thus spent four years, bishop Valerius ordered him to preach the Gospel, which, at that remote period, was done only by bishops. Incredible is the good which the holy man did by his sermons, and the esteem which he gained. In consideration of this, Valerius, with the consent of the other bishops, and to the great rejoicing of all Catholics, consecrated St. Augustine as his Coadjutor, to assist him in the government of the Diocese, and, at his death, to be his successor. Want of space prevents us from enlarging on all the good which St. Augustine did, as well during Valerius' life, as after his death, by abolishing many abuses; by defending the Catholic faith; by vanquishing the most bitter heretics; and especially by writing a great many books, which contain an inexhaustible treasure of erudition. Even the most learned men of that period were unable to comprehend how one man could write with such ability on so many different subjects. Hence the conclusion to which all came was, that his talents and erudition had been an especial gift of God bestowed upon him, because the Church of Christ, assailed and persecuted by so many different heresies, needed a man of such wonderful genius to protect and defend it. None of the heretics were equal to him; they all feared him as much as the Catholics loved and honored him. The fame of his great holiness and

wisdom penetrated even into far off lands, and everywhere his praise resounded on account of the many and glorious victories which he won over the heretics, as well in public disputes as on all other occasions. St. Jerome, St. Paulinus, and other holy men who were then living, sought his friendship, corresponded with him, and hesitated not to ask his advice. The Sovereign Pontiffs of his time held him in great esteem, and in all the councils at which he assisted, his voice was listened to with respect and attention.

In his own eyes, he possessed no merits, and he was so far from all self-esteem, that he humbly received the advice of anyone. He publicly acknowledged and corrected several faults which had crept into his works. Still more to be admired is the fact, that he wrote a book in which he laid bare, before the whole world, all the iniquities he had committed before his conversion to the true faith, in order that the divine mercy bestowed on him might move other sinners to repentance. His income as bishop, and all presents made to him, were given to the poor. From the time of his baptism until his death, he lived in chastity, and proved that a man, although for many years a slave to vice, can, by the grace of God, break all sinful fetters. He, however, avoided carefully every occasion which might endanger his chastity, and used severe means to protect it. The habit of cursing, which he had before he was baptized, he overcame so entirely, that, during all the rest of his life, no one ever heard a curse from his lips. He hated calumny and detraction so exceedingly, that he had written the following words on the wall of his dining-room: "For him who defames the character of his neighbor, there is no place at this table." One day, it happened that a visitor began to speak ill of a neighbor. The Saint, turning to him, said: "Sir, either I must erase those words or you must change your conversation."

The great love of God, which burned in his heart, caused him unceasingly to repent of the iniquities of his past life. He therefore often exclaimed with a sorrowful heart: "Too late have I known thee; too late have I loved thee, thou Beauty ever ancient, and ever new! O unhappy time in which I did not love thee!" This repentance he continued until his death, which took place in his 76th year, to the great grief of all Catholics. Four years before he departed, he had entrusted the Episcopal functions to some one else, as he felt exhausted from his incessant labors, and thenceforth passed his time in devout exercises. During this time, Hippo was besieged by the cruel Vandals. The misery awaiting this city grieved the Saint so deeply that he prayed most fervently to the Almighty, either to save the city

from the enemy, or not to let him live to see its destruction. After this prayer he was seized by a fever, which he considered as a messenger of approaching death. He received, with the most profound devotion, the holy sacraments, and having requested that the seven penitential psalms should be written out for him, he had them hung near his bed, on the wall, that in reading them he might end his life. In his last days he desired to be left alone, that he might not be interrupted in his devotional exercises. This solitude lasted twelve days, during which he shed abundant tears in reading the penitential psalms. He said, one day: "Every Christian, how piously soever he may have lived, ought to die a penitent." With such feelings of intense love and contrition, this great and holy Doctor of the Church died, in the year of our Lord 430. His holy body was buried with great solemnity in the Cathedral, but was afterwards taken to Sardinia, and thence to Pavia, where it rests at this day, and is greatly honored and venerated. The encomiums which the most eminent men have bestowed upon this Saint are almost countless. His works, in which he still continues to live, raise the fame of his learning and virtue above all human praise.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

Out of many points in the life of St. Augustine, which are worthy of imitation, we will consider only a few.

I. St. Augustine was already thirty three years old, when he was converted and began to serve the Almighty. Up to that time he had lived in great frivolity: but after it, in the most perfect holiness. He often wept because he had begun so late to love and serve God, and he endeavored by his zeal to atone for his neglect. You have, perhaps, passed the greater part of your life as wickedly, or even worse than St. Augustine. Endeavor then, to correct your conduct in the time which is still left to you. Repent daily with your whole heart for having begun so late to serve God, and make amends, by redoubled fervor for the time you have lost.

II. St. Augustine long deferred his conversion, but when once resolved, he earnestly did penance

and continued in it and returned not again to his former life of sin. Have you not also deferred your reform long enough? Make to-day a heroic determination. Reform, do penance; and continue in it with firmness and constancy.

III. The incentive to the conversion of St. Augustine was the preaching of St. Ambrose, which he went to hear, and the verse of the Epistle of St. Paul, which he read. A sinner who neither goes to hear a sermon nor reads devout books, is far from conversion, far from his salvation. How is your conduct in regard to this?

IV. St. Augustine revealed to the whole world the iniquities which he had committed in his youth. Why do you hesitate to reveal your sins to a priest, in secret? The same holy teacher says: "If you lie hidden without confession," that is, if you do not confess, but hide your sins, "you will be damned without con-

cession." Is it less terrible to be damned, than to confess your sin to a priest who can never reveal a word of it?

V. St. Augustine believed at first that it would be impossible for him to live chastely and reform his evil habits. But the example of so many Saints who lived a pure life, and afterwards his own experience taught him that it was possible; for, he confessed that what had seemed impossible had become an easy task. You will experience the same if, like St. Augustine, you commence to conquer yourself.

VI. From a hardened heretic, St. Augustine became not only a fervent Catholic, but also a teacher and protector of the true faith. The gift of the Catholic faith he prized above everything, and offered frequently to God most humble thanks for it. "There is no greater treasure," he writes, "no greater honor, no greater good, in this world, than the Catholic faith." From the period of his conversion, he was eager in his endeavors to convert the heretics from their errors, and bring them back into

the pale of the true Church, both, by word of mouth, and also by his pen. His most fervent wish was, that all might be Catholics. May you esteem the gift of the Catholic faith more than you have heretofore done. Give thanks to God that He has bestowed this gift upon you. Seek, by words as well as by a truly Christian life, to convert others to the true faith. And, finally, learn from St. Augustine, how you should pass the time which God gives you, when he sends you sickness before your end. Guard yourself against frivolous and idle conversations, do not permit them at your sick bed. Use the time to repent of your iniquities. Let others read to you from a devout book, that you may constantly be occupied with good thoughts. The last days of your life are precious; use them rightly; they never return. Cease not to repent of your sins and to pray God to forgive you, until your last breath; for, the words of St. Augustine are and ever will remain true: "No Christian, however piously he may have lived, should die without repentance."

TWENTY-NINTH DAY OF AUGUST.

THE BEHEADING OF ST. JOHN BAPTIST.

When St. John, the Baptist and Precursor of Jesus Christ, of whose miraculous birth we have spoken elsewhere, by divine admonition left the desert, he repaired to the river Jordan, to preach repentance, thus to prepare men for the recognition of the Messiah. The abuses and vices which had crept in among the Jews, and had become habitual with them, were rebuked by him without respect to persons. At that period there reigned in Judæa, King Herod, surnamed Antipas, a son of the Herod who murdered the Holy Innocents, and a brother of the Herod who clothed Christ with a white garment and derided Him. This King had forcibly carried off Herodias, the wife of his still living brother, Philip, and had married her. The whole country

was scandalized at this criminal deed, but nobody dared to reproach the King for his unlawful conduct. St. John alone would not be silent. The Gospel says, that Herod was much pleased with St. John's preaching, and followed many of his instructions. Hence the Saint fearlessly approached the King and said to him: "It is not lawful for thee to take thy brother's wife." What more he may have said is not mentioned in the Gospel, but these few bold words were enough to provoke the King to such a degree, and awaken in him such hatred, that he resolved to rid himself of the severe preacher. Fearing, however, a revolt among the people, who greatly esteemed the Saint, he dared not immediately lay hands on him. The godless Herodias, who felt herself also offended by the reproaches of John, incited the King more and more against the holy man, until she had succeeded in raising him to such wrath, that he ordered him to be imprisoned. The disciples of the Saint, however, went to him in the prison, and listened with avidity to his holy instructions. We know that he sent some of them to Christ, to ask Him: "Art thou he that is to come, or do we look for another?" It is the opinion of the holy Fathers that St. John did not send this message to Christ because he doubted that He was the true Messiah, but that his disciples, by hearing Him preach, and by witnessing the miracles He performed, might more readily believe what he had told them of the Saviour. It is believed that the imprisonment of John took place in December and lasted until the month of August. Herod's birthday was celebrated in this month, and among other festivities, he gave a splendid banquet, at which all the princes of Galilee were present. At the close of it, Salome, the daughter of Herodias, entered the banquet hall to entertain the guests by dancing. The King was so much pleased with her that he told her that she might ask him a favor, and promised to grant it, even if it should cost him the half of his kingdom. This inconsiderate promise he confirmed by an oath. The frivolous dancer, not knowing what to request, asked the advice of her mother. The latter, who had long wished St. John out of her way, in order that nothing might disturb her in her criminal lust, said quickly: "Go and ask the head of John the Baptist." The wicked daughter, returning to the King, said boldly: "Give me here in a dish, the head of John the Baptist." The King was struck with horror at her unexpected demand; but not wishing to grieve her and being unwilling to break his rash oath, he sent a soldier of his body-guard into the prison to behead the Saint and bring his head in a dish. The cruel and unjust order was forthwith executed, and the holy head was brought in a dish to Salome,

who handed it to her wicked mother. St. Jerome relates that Herodias, to gratify her rage against the holy man, pricked his tongue with a bodkin, in revenge for the fearless reproofs it had given to the vices of the King. The disciples of St. John buried the holy body of their beloved master between the two prophets Eliseus and Abdias. The sacred head was buried by the unchaste Herodias in her palace, where it remained concealed many years, when it was discovered by an apparition of the Saint himself, and has ever since been greatly venerated by the Christians. At the present day it is kept at Rome, in the Church of St. Sylvester. The justice of God did not leave the cruelty and tyranny of Herod unpunished. The Jewish historian, Josephus, relates that he lost honor and crown: for the King of Arabia, whose daughter, the lawful wife of Herod, had been repudiated, invaded his domains with his armies, and defeated him. The emperor Caligula afterwards banished him to Lyons in France. From that city he fled with Herodias into Spain, where both, in punishment for their crimes, died in misery. The frivolous and wicked daughter of Herodias also received her deserts. Whilst she was walking over a frozen river, the ice broke, and she sank to her neck in the water, and the ice, rushing again together, severed her head entirely from her body. Thus ended this audacious and shameless dancer.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. John was cast innocently into prison, and after having been there for some time, he was decapitated; and during this time, the godless King Herod was sitting upon his throne, and the wicked Herodias and her daughter lived in joy and pleasure. Even at the present time, the life of many wicked persons is full of temporal comforts, while the pious often innocently suffer great trials. Some, observing this, are surprized, and even doubt the justice of God; but they err; for, God, who knows best, permits or ordains all these things justly. He allows the pious to suffer, in order to increase their reward in heaven, or to give them an opportunity to atone, in this world, for the sins they have committed. To

the wicked He gives temporal goods, to recompense them for the few good works they have done, and for which He cannot reward them in heaven because their works were done in a state of sin. Who, therefore, can reasonably murmur at the decrees of God? Who can doubt the justice of the Almighty, especially when we consider the fate of the pious and the wicked in eternity? St. John now gloriously reigns in heaven; Herod, Herodias, and the impudent dancer burn in hell. Thus will the pious, who suffer much upon this earth, if they bear their suffering patiently as St. John did, be eternally happy in heaven; while the godless will suffer eternally in hell. Hence behold and admire the justice of God, and never permit

yourself to question His decrees. He is just and all His judgments are full of divine wisdom.

II. The impudent dance of Herodias' daughter occasioned the beheading of John the Baptist. The Saint died, because Herod, pleased with her dance, had promised, under oath, to grant her whatever she might ask. Advised by her mother, she demanded the head of the holy forerunner of Christ, which the king gave her, believing that he was, by his oath, obliged to fulfil her request. By acting thus, he committed great wrong; for, nobody is bound to keep an oath which binds to sin. Still it remains true, that the dance was the cause of St. John's death; and this gave a great many holy Fathers occasion to write against dancing. The summary of their lessons is as follows: Dancing in itself is no sin; but it is certain that dancing, as it is done in our time, leads to many sins, which are committed in thought, word and action, and often gives occasion to crimes deserving of hell. Experience shows that many innocent persons have fallen into vice through dancing, or by only being present at dancing: vices of which they never would have become guilty, had they not seen and heard what they saw and heard at balls and parties. Hence, all the holy Fathers preached with severity against dancing, and exhorted all Christians to abstain from it. St. Chrysostom hesitated not to say, that the devil was the inventor of it, and was pleased to be among those who practised it. "God did not give us our feet to dance, but to walk modestly," are his words, "the devil induces men to dance and dances with them." St. Ephrem says: "Whence comes the dance? who has taught it to Christians? Truly, neither Peter, nor Paul, nor John, nor any man filled with the Spirit of God; but

the hellish dragon!" "In the dance," says St. Ambrose, "there is no modesty, no chastity; especially when done at night, it is a friend of vice. The daughter of an adulteress, like the daughter of Herodias, may dance: but whoever will live pure and chaste, must avoid it." "St. Charles Borromeo, among other pious directions, gives the following: "Dancing, so dangerous to Christian morals, should be banished entirely by the faithful, as it originates many sins against purity, and causes extravagances, evil deeds and assassinations." In like manner speak other holy Fathers. Whether we should believe them or the world, which pronounces dancing innocent, you may decide yourself. I can only say, that among the many Saints, whose lives I have studied, I have not found one holy dancer of either sex; but have often read that those who were addicted, for a time, to this dangerous amusement, repented of it greatly, and did severe penance. Neither have I found anywhere that dancing is recommended as a means for living a chaste and Christian life. I have never heard nor read, that anybody returned from dancing more pious, or that he received, on his death-bed, any comfort from the thought of those hours which he had spent in it. Often, however, have I read and heard the reverse. We need not speak of the chastisement which the Almighty has frequently inflicted for such frivolities in this world. Happy those who can say with the chaste Sarah: "I have kept my soul clean from all lust. Never have I joined with them that play, neither have I made myself a partaker with them that walk in lightness." (Tob. iii.) By those, "that walk in lightness," are understood, according to St. Basil, the frivolous dancers.

On the subject of the inconsiderate oath of King Herod, dear reader,

I have to give you a few words of instruction. It is most certain that Herod was not obliged to keep his oath ; for, his oath was unlawful and wicked. To keep such an oath is wrong. Hence, those non-Catholics do wrong, who will not be converted to the true religion, because they think that they ought not to break the promise they made at their first communion, or at confirmation, but that they are bound to keep it. They took at that time, an oath to remain true to their religion, believing that the Protestant religion which they professed was the true one, con-

sequently the oath rather obliges them to quit Protestantism and join the Catholic Church as soon as they become convinced that she alone is the true Church of Christ. To remain in heresy is sinful ; whoever knowingly promises to do this, commits sin. But he sins still more by keeping this promise, when he is convinced of his error. Hence, he is not obliged to keep this promise or oath, more than he, who has made an oath, not to pardon his neighbor, or not to go to Church, is obliged to keep his promise or oath.

THIRTIETH DAY OF AUGUST.

ST. ROSE OF LIMA, VIRGIN.

God gave to the Christians of America, and all over the world, a beautiful example of holiness, at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century, in the Saint whose festival is this day commemorated by the Catholic Church. Her native place was Lima, the capital of Peru. She was named Isabel, but while yet in the cradle, she was called Rose, as her face, in its loveliness, resembled a rose. She took the surname of St. Mary, by order of the Blessed Virgin. Already in her childhood, her conduct was holy. Her intention was to follow the example of St. Catherine of Sienna, whose life she had read, and therefore she entered the third order of St. Dominic. When five years old, she consecrated her virginity to God, and was such a perfect hand-maiden of the Lord, that during her whole life, she never offended Him by a mortal sin, nor even intentionally by one that was venial. Her time was divided between prayer and work. Twelve hours she gave to devout exercises, two or three to sleep, the rest to work. When grown to womanhood, her hand was sought by several, but she always unhesitatingly gave the answer, that she was already promised to a heavenly spouse. That, however, her parents might no further urge her, she herself cut off her hair, as a sign of her consecration to God. She treated her innocent body with extreme severity. From her childhood she abstained from fruit,

which, in Peru, is so delicious. Her fasts and abstinences were more than human; for, when scarcely six years old, her nourishment consisted almost entirely of water and bread. At the age of fifteen, she made a vow never to eat meat, except when obliged by obedience. Not even when sick did she partake of better food. Sometimes for five or eight days, she ate nothing at all, living only on the bread of angels. During the whole of Lent, she took only five citron seeds, daily. Incredible as this may appear to the reader, it is told by unquestionable authority. Her bed was a rough board, or some knotted logs of wood. Her pillow was a bag filled with rushes or stones. Every night she scourged her body with two small iron chains, in remembrance of the painful scourging of our Saviour, and for the conversion of sinners. When, however, her Confessor forbade her this, she, after the example of St. Catherine of Siena, bound, three times around her body, a thin chain, which in a few weeks, had cut so deeply into the flesh that it was scarcely to be seen. Fearing that she would be compelled to reveal it, she prayed to God for help, and the chain became loose of itself. Hardly were the wounds healed, when she again wore the chain, until her Confessor, being informed of it, forbade her to do so. She then had a penitential robe made of horse-hair, which reached below her knees, and occasioned her intense suffering. She wore under her veil, in remembrance of our Saviour's crown of thorns, a crown which was studded inside with pins, and which wounded her head most painfully. To attend the better to her prayers, she loved solitude above everything. To this end, she asked the permission of her parents to build a small cell for herself in the corner of the garden. This cell was only five feet long and four feet wide; but she lived more happily in it than many others do in royal palaces. O, how many graces she obtained from heaven in this place! How many visions she had there of St. Catherine of Siena, her Guardian Angel, the Blessed Virgin, and even of Christ Himself! She was also frequently favored with visions in other places. The most remarkable of these was one which she had on Palm Sunday, in the chapel of the Holy Rosary, before an image of the Blessed Virgin. Rose, gazing at the picture, perceived that the Virgin Mother, as well as the divine Child, regarded her most graciously, and at last she heard distinctly from the lips of the divine Child, the words: "Rose, you shall be my spouse." Although filled with holy awe, she replied, in the words which the Blessed Virgin had spoken to the Angel: "Behold, I am a handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word." After this, the Virgin Mother said: "May you well appreciate the favor which my

SON has accorded to you, dear Rose!" I leave it to the pious reader to picture to himself the inexpressible joy which this vision gave to Rose. It served her as a most powerful incentive to the practice of all virtues. Among these virtues, surely not the least was the heroic patience which this holy virgin showed, as well in bodily suffering, as in interior, spiritual anguish. The Almighty permitted her, for fifteen years, to be daily tormented, at least, for an hour, by the most hideous imaginations, which were of such a nature, that she sometimes thought that she was in the midst of hell. She could think neither of God nor of the graces He had bestowed upon her; neither did prayer or devout reading give her any comfort. It sometimes seemed as if she had been forsaken by God. In this manner, God wished to prove and purify her virtue, as He had done in regard to many other Saints. Her patience was also most severely tried by painful diseases, as she sometimes had a combination of two or three maladies at the same time, and suffered most intensely. During the last three years of her life, she was disabled in almost all her limbs; but her resignation to the will of God was too perfect to allow her to utter a word of complaint. All she desired and prayed for was to suffer still more for Christ's sake. She, at the same time, encouraged other sick persons, whom she served with indescribable kindness, as long as she was well. She endeavored to comfort them when it was necessary to prepare them for a happy death; for, her greatest joy was to speak of God and to lead others to Him. One day when she was greatly troubled about her salvation, Christ appeared to her and said: "My daughter, I condemn those only who will not be saved." He assured her at the same time, first, that she would go to heaven; secondly, that she never would lose His grace through mortal sin; thirdly, that divine assistance would never fail her in any emergency. God also revealed to her the day and hour of her death, which took place in her thirty-first year. After the holy sacraments had been administered to her, she begged all present to forgive her faults, and exhorted them to love God. The nearer the hour of her death approached, the greater became her joy. Shortly before her end, she went into an extasy, and after it, she said to her Confessor: "Oh! how much I could tell you of the sweetness of God, and of the blissful heavenly dwelling of the Almighty!" She requested her brother to take away the pillow that had been placed under her head, that she might die on the boards, as Christ had died on the cross. When this was done, she exclaimed three times: "Jesus, Jesus, be with me!" and expired. After death, her face was so beautiful, that all who looked at her were lost in astonish-

ment. Her funeral was most imposing. The Canons first carried the body a part of the way to the church; after them the senate, and finally, the superiors of the different orders, so great was the esteem they all entertained for her holiness. God honored her after her death, by many miracles; and Clement X. canonized her in 1671. and placed her among the number of the holy virgins.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Have you been able to read without astonishment the different means that St. Rose employed to give pain to her body, and constantly to mortify herself? What do you think of it? I will tell you what I think. We find in the lives of almost all the Saints, that they abstained from all worldly pleasure, and exercised themselves in voluntary penances. As, however, the people of our day will hear nothing of all this, and will live in comfort, and still think that, by avoiding all mortifications of the flesh, and by enjoying all the pleasures of the world, they will go to the same heaven into which the Saints endeavored to enter by so many voluntary austerities, I must come to the conclusion that either the Saints acted very foolishly in being so severe to themselves, or that the world of our day errs in imagining that it has found an easier way to eternal life. What do you think? Whom will you follow? The world or the Saints? Can you name to me a single one who has followed the world and yet entered the Kingdom of God? Perhaps you hope to be the first. Take care; your hope will deceive you.

II. St. Rose was assured by God that she would be saved, that she would never lose His grace, and that heavenly assistance would never fail her. Ah! what great and priceless favors! The chaste virgin had made herself worthy by her holy life, of these graces, as much as was in her power. Your tepid piety cannot promise you such graces; but it is your duty to pray fre-

quently and earnestly that God may grant them to you. Pray therefore fervently and often to God that He may not condemn you, but grant you life everlasting. Pray to Him humbly, that you may never lose His grace by a mortal sin, and that He may grant you assistance in all your needs. To obtain these graces endeavor to lead a Christian life. Although this does not give you an infallible assurance of your salvation, it gives you reason to hope that you will not go to perdition. Think on Christ's words: "I condemn no one who wishes to be saved." "But who is he, you perhaps ask, who will not be saved." According to the words, no one; but according to the works, many, and they are all those who become guilty of mortal sin, who continue in their iniquity, who defer their penance too long. If we voluntarily do what we know will lead us to destruction, it may in truth be said of us, that we wish to be condemned. If we do no penance, after having committed sin, it may again be said, with truth, that we wish to be condemned; because we do not make use of those means by which we may escape hell. Examine yourself and see if you do not perhaps belong to those unfortunate beings who will be condemned. If you do not desire to be one of their number, avoid sin; and if you have committed it, do penance immediately. "As often as a man becomes guilty of a mortal sin, so often does he sentence himself to eternal misery," says St. Chrysostom.

THIRTY-FIRST DAY OF AUGUST.

SAINT RAYMUND NONNATUS, CONFESSOR.

Catalonia was the native country of St. Raymund who, to the astonishment of the Physicians, was born after his mother's death. As soon as he was old enough to comprehend how early he had become an orphan, he chose the Queen of Heaven as his mother, and to his last day, called her by no other name. When he had studied for some time with great success, his father, fearing the youth would enter a Religious Order, sent him into the country to take care of a farm. Raymund obeyed, and found there also opportunity to serve God. He became very fond of solitude and therefore chose for his occupation the care of the sheep, in order to gain more time for prayer and meditation. At the foot of the mountain to which he generally led his flock, was a small, deserted hermitage, with a chapel, in which an extremely lovely picture of the Blessed Virgin was kept, which was a source of great joy to him. He there spent several hours daily, in devout exercises. Other shepherds, who observed this, and to whom the piety of Raymund was a reproach of their own negligence, reported to his father that he was doing nothing but praying, and thereby neglected his flock. The father came to convince himself of the fact, but although he found his son praying in the chapel, he saw that the flock was meanwhile attended to by a youth of uncommon beauty of form and features. Asking his son who this young shepherd was, and why he had engaged him, Raymund, to whom it was unknown that Providence had worked a miracle in his behalf, fell on his knees before his father, and begging forgiveness, earnestly promised not to commit the fault again. The Divine Mother, of whom he begged the grace of knowing his vocation, appeared to him, saying that she desired him to take the habit of the newly established Order for the redemption of captives. He did so, and was sent to Algiers where he found a great many Christians in slavery, and as the money he had brought for their ransom was not sufficient, he offered himself as a hostage to redeem the others. He was induced to this by the danger in which the prisoners were of losing their faith and with it eternal life. This great and heroic charity gave him occasion to suffer much for the sake of Christ. At first, he was treated very harshly by his masters, but when they began to fear that he would die before the ransom

was paid, they allowed him more liberty, which the holy man used only for the salvation of the captive Christians. He strengthened them in their faith, and, at the same time, endeavored to convert the infidels. Accused of this before the Judge, he was condemned to be impaled alive, and nothing but the hope of a large ransom prevented the execution of this barbarous sentence, and caused it to be changed into a cruel bastinado. Raymund, who desired nothing more fervently than to die for Christ's sake, was not intimidated by what he had undergone, but wherever an opportunity offered itself, he explained to the infidels the word of God. The Judge, informed of it, ordered him to be whipped through all the streets of the city, and then to be brought to the market-place, where the executioner, with a red hot iron, pierced his lips, through which a small chain was drawn and closed with a padlock, in order that the holy man might no more use his tongue to instruct others. Every three days the lock was opened, and he received just enough food to keep him from starvation. Besides this, he was loaded with chains, and cast into a dungeon, where he lay for eight months, until his ransom arrived. Although it was the desire of the Saint to remain among the infidels, as he would there have an opportunity to gain the crown of martyrdom, obedience recalled him to his monastery.

When the Pope was informed of all that Raymund had suffered during his captivity, he nominated him Cardinal; but the humble Saint returned to his convent and lived like all the other brothers of the Order, without making the least change in his dress, food, or dwelling, nor accepting any honor due to him as so high a dignitary of the Church. Gregory IX, desired to have so holy a man near him, and called him to Rome. The Saint obeyed and set out on his journey. He had, however, scarcely reached Cardona, six miles from Barcelona, when he was seized with a malignant fever, which soon became fatal. He desired most fervently to receive the holy Sacraments, but as the priest called to administer them to him, delayed to come, God sent an angel, who brought him the divine food. After receiving it, he returned thanks to God for all the graces he had received from Him during his life, and peacefully gave up his soul, in the 37th year of his age. After his death, the inhabitants of Cardona, the clergy of Barcelona and the religious of his order, contended as to where the holy body should be buried. Each party thought they had the greatest claim to possess his tomb. At last they resolved to leave the decision to Providence. They placed the coffin, in which the holy body reposed, upon a blind mule, determined that the treasure should be deposited in the place to which

this animal should carry it. The mule, accompanied by a large concourse of people, went on until it had reached the hermitage and chapel where the holy cardinal, as a shepherd boy, had spent so many hours in prayer, and had received so many graces from God. There the Saint was buried, and St. Peter Nolasco, in the course of time, founded there a Convent, with a Church in which the holy remains are still preserved and greatly honored by the people of Catalonia.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Raymund instructed the faithful and the infidels; and to prevent him from this, his enemies most barbarously closed his mouth with a lock. Oh! how much more just it would be, if such a lock were suspended from your mouth, which you open so frequently to lie, to curse, to blaspheme, to quarrel, to calumniate, to make impure speeches, to sing impure songs, and to talk frivolously in Churches. But believe me, if your mouth is not punished in this world, it will most surely suffer in the next, and as the mouth of St. Raymund, which he used so nobly, and in which he suffered so cruelly, will be specially rewarded in the abode of the angels, so will your wicked mouth be specially punished in the dwelling of the evil spirits. St. Gregory believes that the rich man suffers special pains in his tongue, because he used it at table for indecent speeches, as is yet to-day the habit of many. The same punishment awaits your tongue, your sinful mouth; and if you wish to escape it, be careful how you use them. Place the fear of God as a guard over them, that they may not utter a word offensive to the Most High. "Hedge in thine ears with thorns, hear not a wicked tongue, and make doors and bars to thy mouth." (Eccles. xxviii.)

II. St. Raymund, at the close of his days, gave fervent thanks to the Almighty for all favors bestowed upon him, and thus ended his life full of

heavenly comfort. To give thanks to God is a duty which we ought to perform every morning and evening; for, no day, no night passes in which we do not partake of the bounty of the Lord. You thank men who bestow kindness upon you; why then do you not thank God who has overwhelmed you with favors, and still grants them to you daily. Do not forget your duty, but attend to it every day. Give thanks to Him also at the end of each month, in consideration of so many benefits which you have received from Him and for which you did not even ask. Whom have you to thank that you did not die during the past four weeks; that you have not been condemned to eternal flames, as so many that have been called away? Whence comes it that you were preserved from the dangers and misfortunes that befell so many others? that time and opportunity are left you to work out your salvation, whilst thousands no longer possess them? Most assuredly, these are all benefits of the Almighty which you deserve much less than a great many others. Is it not just that you should give fervent thanks to God at the end of each month? But is your soul in such a condition that you can end this month or close your life, as peacefully as St. Raymund? Ah! if you had lived as he did, if you had constantly practised good works, and had borne adversity

<p>with his patience, you might be comforted now, as well as at the end of your days. As, however, this is unhappily not the case, repent of your wickedness and indolence with your whole heart, and pray humbly for grace to make better use of the</p>	<p>next month. Endeavor to atone, during the same, for your past negligence, that, one day you may not sigh uselessly: "I have had empty months." (Job. viii.) "Who will grant me that I might be according to the months past." (Job xxix.)</p>
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LAST SUNDAY IN AUGUST OR FIRST SUNDAY IN SEPTEMBER.*

FESTIVAL OF THE GUARDIAN ANGELS.

The Holy Church has instituted a special festival to recall to our mind the grace which God's infinite mercy has bestowed upon us by appointing the holy Angels for our temporal and spiritual protection. This festival should remind us to give thanks to God for this great benefit and to show our gratitude to the holy Angels for their care and solicitude. That this may be performed with due zeal and devotion, consider well the following remarks.

The Almighty created a countless number of heavenly spirits, by nature immortal, and bestowed upon them especial graces. I say, a countless number; for it is said in Holy Writ: "Is there any numbering of His Soldiers!" (Job. xxv.) By "soldiers," are understood His Angels. Somewhere else it is written: "Thousands of thousands ministered to Him and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before Him." (Daniel, vii.) These Heavenly Spirits are divided into three classes, and each class into three Choirs; hence they consist of nine Choirs. The first, and highest is composed of the Seraphim; the second, of the Cherubim; the third of the Thrones; the fourth, of the Dominations; the fifth of the Principalities, the sixth, of the Powers; the seventh, of the Virtues; the eighth, of the Archangels; and the ninth, of the Angels. All surround the throne of the most High, constantly praise His infinite Majesty, and are ever ready to execute His commands; still, each of these Choirs has its separate function, as we are taught by Theologians. From the last, or ninth Choir, God has assigned to each human being, a Guardian to protect him. Hence they are called Guardian Angels. Thus the Holy Church teaches, and it cannot be doubted that this teaching is

* The feast of the Holy Guardian Angels is, in many churches, celebrated on the 2nd of October.

true, as it is founded on the words of Holy Writ. To each human being is given an angel, a prince of heaven to protect him in soul and body, to cheer him in adversity, to console him in sorrow, to strengthen him in temptations, to assist him in danger, to prevent him from doing evil, to incite him to do good, and thus lead him to heaven, if he is obedient to his Guardian Angel. Just as in former times. God gave to the Israelites a special Angel to guard them and to lead them into the promised land, according to the words: "Behold, I will send my Angel, who shall go before thee and keep thee in thy journey; and bring thee into the place that I have prepared;" (Exodus, xxiii;) so He gives to each man an Angel to protect him on the road of this life, to lead him happily to Heaven, of which the promised land was the type. Pause here, my dear reader, and consider the greatness of this mercy of God towards us. As long as the world has existed, we have never heard of a monarch, who gave one of his noble courtiers the command to be continually at the side of a common peasant, or other man of low estate, to take care of him and lead him safely to a far-off land. But what was never heard of in a temporal king, this and much more our holy faith teaches us is done for us by the great and merciful God, the King of heaven and earth. He has given to every one, even to the most wretched being, one of the Princes of heaven, to take care of him, constantly to accompany him, and to open for him the gates of the eternal world. How priceless a grace! How infinite a goodness! Judge yourself, my dear reader, if you have not every reason to offer thanks to the great God, who has shown such infinite kindness towards you, and who is thus solicitous for your salvation. To-day especially, ought you to render thanksgivings to Him; and for this purpose the festival which we celebrate was instituted.

Reflect, also, how the Angels, to whose care God has confided us, regard us. They are perfectly satisfied with those whom God has given into their charge, be they poor or rich, of high or of low standing. They perform their mission with the greatest love and solicitude. "They love us," says St. Bernard, "because Christ has loved us." They prove their love by deeds; they avert many dangers of body and soul from us, and protect us most miraculously; they prevent us from doing wrong, and animate us to do good; they fortify us to resist the temptations of satan. When we have been guilty of sin, they incite us to do penance, to appease the wrath of God, and to turn from us His well-merited punishment; they rejoice when we do penance, and convert our hearts to God; they offer our prayers, fasts, and other good works to the Almighty, and pray to Him for us.

They do not leave us, asleep or awake, well or sick ; they assist us in life and in death, and accompany our souls to the Judgment-seat of the Most High. Holy Writ is full of examples which prove all that I have here said. Many more examples are found in the history of the church, and in the Lives of the Saints. An Angel saved the famished Ishmael from danger of death. An Angel preserved the life of the obedient Isaac, by checking the drawn sword of his father. An angel led the pious Lot out of Sodom, and thus saved him from being burned with the rest of the inhabitants. An Angel protected the Israelites against all their enemies. An Angel fed the prophet Elias in the wilderness, and strengthened him to proceed on his long journey. An Angel delivered the pious king Ezekias and the city of Jerusalem from many thousand enemies, by slaying them all in one night. An Angel preserved the prophet Daniel unharmed in the midst of the lions, and brought the prophet Habacuc to feed him. An Angel kept the three companions of the same holy prophet uninjured in the furnace of Babylon. An Angel accompanied the young Tobias as guide during his journey, and instructed him in what manner he should marry the chaste Sarah, to prevent the Evil one from harming him, as had been done to seven others, who had been slain by the devil. Besides benefiting him in various other ways, he saved him also from the danger of being devoured by a monstrous fish. It was the same Angel who had offered the prayers of the elder Tobias to the Almighty, and who afterwards, restored him to sight. An Angel shielded the chaste Judith in great dangers of soul and body. An Angel instructed the Centurion Cornelius how to save his soul. An Angel delivered St. Peter from prison and the danger of death. An Angel preserved the life of St. Paul, and of others, who were with him in the ship. Many other similar events are found in Holy Writ, and in the Lives of the Saints. And what are all these but proofs of the love and solicitude of the Angels for us? Reflect upon your past life, and see if you yourself have not received sufficient proof of the devotion and care of your holy Guardian Angel? That you have not lost your life in many dangers which encompassed you ; that you have been guarded from many sins ; that you did not die in your sin, but have time to do penance ; that you have received so many spiritual and temporal favors and benefits from the Almighty : all these, and many other favors, are to be ascribed to the powerful protection, the love and care of your holy Guardian Angel and to his intercession with God in your behalf.

In consideration of so many blessings, of such watchful pro-

tection, such indescribable devotion and solicitude, you must reasonably conclude that you owe especial gratitude to your holy Guardian Angel. Of course, you have first to render thanks to the Almighty, who placed you under the protection of so noble and kind a Prince of heaven. But St. Bernard exhorts us also to show ourselves grateful towards those, who, obeying the command of God, watch over us so lovingly, and assist us in all our needs. "Let us be full of devotion and gratitude towards such powerful protectors," says he; "let us return love for love, and endeavor to honor them with our whole heart." When God promised to the Israelites to send an Angel to protect them on their journey and lead them to the promised land, He added: "Take notice of him and hear his voice, and do not think him one to be contemned; for he will not forgive when thou hast sinned, and my name is in him;" which means that he represents God. (Exod. xxiii.) These words show you how you must prove your gratitude in deeds.

"Honor him;" this is the first thing which God demands. "Honor him;" because he is an Angel of God, a representative of God, a great Prince of heaven. "Honor him," because God has raised him to great glory; he sees the face of the Most High, and often acts in His name. "Honor him." You honor your Guardian Angel if you call with confidence on him in all your cares, especially when your soul or your body is endangered, in great temptations, in life and death. Tobias had hardly perceived the danger of being devoured by a monstrous fish, when he called to his faithful guide, who was an Angel: "Sir, he cometh upon me!" He asked help and received it instantly. Why should you not call, with equal confidence, to your Guardian Angel, especially when the hellish monster, the roaring lion, as Holy Writ calls him, the devil, the Evil One, tempts you to sin, and thus endeavors to devour you? "As often as a great temptation or sorrow approaches you," writes St. Bernard, "call to your guide, your protector, and say: "Sir, help me, or I go to destruction!"

"Obey his voice," says the Lord. He speaks to your soul by interior movements or inspirations. For instance, if you are in danger of sin, he calls to you: "Depart from evil, avoid sin." If you are surrounded by occasions of evil, he calls to you: "Withdraw from here! Flee hastily." If you have committed sin, he exhorts you: "Do penance! Return without delay to your God!" In like manner, he admonishes you interiorly, to practice good works, to be more zealous in the service of God, more solicitous for your salvation. Obey this voice, this call of your holy Guardian Angel. If you do not, you despise him,

which is contrary to the command of God, who will surely not leave it unpunished, as it is an offence done, in some respect, to His Majesty. Always obey the voice of your Guardian Angel, and offend him not by disobedience, as otherwise you will not be worthy of his protection.

In conclusion, I will give you a memorable admonition of St. Bernard. He urges you, constantly to call to mind the presence of your Angel, and duly to honor him everywhere. This, however, says he, should be done principally by avoiding sin. For it is contrary to all the respect you owe him, to sin in his presence. "In all places," these are the words of the holy teacher, "In all places, manifest to your Angel that honor which is due to him, and dare not commit in his presence what you would not dare to do if I were near." Elsewhere, he says: "Let us walk in such a manner before the eyes of the Angels, that we do not offend their sight." "We must guard ourselves not to offend them, and hence we must assiduously perform all those exercises which we know are agreeable to them, as temperance, chastity, voluntary poverty, devout prayers, &c." Impress these words deeply in your heart; for they contain the best advice as to the means you should employ to honor your holy Guardian Angel, and to assure yourself of his loving and powerful protection during your life, and at the hour of your death. Avoid everything that you know is displeasing to him, and practice, with great zeal, all that you are convinced will be agreeable to him.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The Almighty has placed you under the protection of an Angel. Render thanks to Him this day for so great a benefit. Give thanks also to your Guardian Angel for all the love and care which until now he has always bestowed upon you. Show him always due honor, in accordance with the admonitions of the Lord. Let no day pass on which you do not, at least morning and evening, place yourself under his powerful protection. Do the same if you are harassed by care, sorrow, sadness or temptation, and in all dangers that beset your soul or body. Pray frequently to him to guard you especially in the dangerous combat you will have to wage with the spirit

of hell in your last hour. The holy Church counsels you to do this, when in the name of all the faithful she thus invokes the holy Guardian Angels: "O, all ye holy angels, our protectors; guard us in the combat, that we may not be lost in the fearful Judgment." Remember that your Angel is always near you, especially in Church and when you are tempted to sin. Do nothing of which you would be ashamed in the presence of an upright and dignified person. Obey the voice of your Angel, as God himself commands. The Angel speaks to you deep in your heart; he admonishes you through sermons, confessors and devout books. Despise not his

exhortations, but follow when he calls you. Avoid whatever may displease him, and do all that is agreeable to him. Sin, as an offence to God, is displeasing to him, especially all sin against chastity. Avoid it. Good works, zeal in the service of God, the frequent and pious partaking of the holy Sacraments, a modest deportment in Church, are all pleasing to him; hence, practise them faithfully. In this manner, you will make yourself worthy of the powerful protection of your Guardian Angel, during your life and at the hour of your death.

II. Your holy angel is most perfectly obedient to the Almighty. Following the command of God, he has taken charge of you, and experience has convinced you that he performs his mission well. Be you also obedient to your God. He has entrusted to you a precious, immortal soul, and has commanded you to take good care of it. Take heed that it suffers nothing; this will be for your own benefit. If you have children, servants, or others under you, God has also given them into your care. Be obedient to God and do your duty. Before all things be solicitous for their salvation.

Your Guardian Angel is a pure spirit. He has the greatest horror for the least shadow of impurity. Imitate him. Detest every thing, however trifling it may appear, that is unchaste. Do not regard anything as trifling, which may injure

chastity; for, nothing can be a trifle, that is displeasing to the Divine Majesty or to your Guardian Angel. Your holy Angel accompanies you joyfully to Church. He there worships, with great veneration, in the company of many other Angels, your Saviour truly present. Imitate him. Rejoice to go to Church and there worship your God, with angelic reverence and devotion. Say your prayers in such a manner, that your holy Angel may offer them to the Almighty with pleasure. Do not profane your devotions, by unnecessary conversation, by idly gazing around, by indecent manners or other similar irreverences. God requires an unspotted sacrifice, and your holy Angel will not present any other to the Divine Majesty.

Although your Guardian Angel has charge of you, and is constantly with you, he nevertheless enjoys the divine presence and glorifies and praises God unceasingly. Imitate him, by frequently thinking of God during your day's work; by working in His presence and by praising Him, as well by those prayers which you say at stated times of the day, as also by renewing your good intentions, and by short pious ejaculations.

If you follow your holy Angel on earth, you will also enjoy his society in heaven. The Venerable Bede writes; "If we desire to attain to the society of the holy Angels in heaven, we must neglect nothing to follow them on earth."

FIRST DAY OF SEPTEMBER.

ST. ÆGIDIUS OR GILES, ABBOT AND HERMIT.

Athens, the Capital of Greece, was the birthplace of St. Ægidius. His parents, Theodore and Pelagia, were of high rank and wealthy, but they were still more distinguished for their virtue and piety. Hence, their first care was, not to leave great riches to their son, but to lead him in the path of rectitude by their example and instruction. Ægidius followed the wishes of his parents in all things, and already in his youth evinced a magnanimous contempt for the world and all that is temporal, and a most generous love for the poor and unfortunate, whom he endeavored to assist in every possible way. After the early death of his parents, the pious youth gave the whole of his inheritance to the poor, with the intention of serving God in voluntary poverty, and aspiring only to heavenly treasures. This heroic deed God rewarded with still greater favors than the former, and with the continual gift of miracles. A man possessed by the evil spirit, one day disturbed the congregation in Church by terrific howls. Ægidius went up to him and commanded the devil, in the name of Jesus Christ, to be silent and leave the man; and he was immediately obeyed. At another time, a poisonous serpent had wound itself around a man and mortally wounded him. The Saint commanded the reptile to depart, and healed the man who was already in his last agony. These miraculous events brought upon Ægidius so much honor and esteem, that he resolved to leave his home and seek a place where, unknown and without fear of receiving empty honors, he might serve the Almighty. He therefore, went on board a ship which was going to France. During the voyage, a terrible storm arose, which threatened destruction to all. Scarcely, however, had Ægidius raised his hands to the Almighty, when the sea became calm, and all signs of danger disappeared. When the ship arrived in France, the Saint went to Arles, to the holy Archbishop Cæsarius, and requested to be led by him in the path of spiritual perfection. Two years were thus spent by him; but after this time, he again secretly went away, desiring to escape earthly praise; for, the gift he possessed of working miracles procured for him everywhere the greatest veneration, which to him was unendurable. Crossing a river, he came to an old hermit, with whom he lived for a time a most quiet, holy life; but here also he soon became known for the many miracles he wrought on the sick; and the great honors paid him drove him

away once more. In a dark forest to which he fled, he found, after long wandering, a cavern in a rock, which he chose as a dwelling. The ground about it produced nothing but wild herbs and roots, which became his only sustenance. As notwithstanding this, he was determined to remain there and to serve God in deep solitude, the Almighty provided for His servant by a miracle. He sent him, daily at a certain hour, a hind which nourished him with her milk. The Saint, humbly thanking heaven for this grace, found in it a new motive to serve the Lord with still greater zeal. He led a life more angelic than human, occupying his time in prayer, praising God, and pious meditations.

Some years later the King of France was hunting in the same forest where St. Ægidius dwelt. The dogs, having pursued the hind, which fed the Saint with her milk, to the cavern, barked loudly at its entrance, until a huntsman, who had followed them, shot an arrow into the cave, with the intention of driving the animal out of it. But instead of doing so, he wounded the holy man, who received the shot without uttering the slightest complaint. The hunters, forcing their way into the cavern, found him covered with blood, and the hind lying at his feet. The King, to whom the whole was reported, came to beg the hermit's pardon, and ordered his wounds to be bandaged and all possible care to be taken of his health. He wished to bestow upon him a royal gift, but the Saint refused to accept his offers. Before leaving, the King asked if there was nothing he could do for him; to which the Saint answered that if the King wished really to confer a favor on him, he would erect a monastery on the place where they were standing, wherein the ancient discipline of the Egyptian hermits should be observed. The King promised to build the monastery and kept his royal word.

Hardly was the monastery finished, when a great many desired to be admitted into it, in order to serve God in solitude and with the greatest perfection. St. Ægidius became their Abbot, and how solicitous he was for their spiritual welfare may be concluded from the eminent degree of holiness at which he arrived. He was in every virtue a model to those under him and animated them to follow his example. The miracles which he again wrought made him famous far and near. The greatest of these was the conversion of the King, for whom St. Ægidius had obtained from God by his prayers, so efficacious a grace, that he confessed his great iniquities and did penance until his death.

At length, the Saint, full of merits, left this world on the

first of September, towards the end of the sixth century, after he had lived many years in great holiness, had converted many hardened sinners and worked for the salvation of men and the honor of the Almighty. The many miracles which took place at his tomb, gathered there, in a short time, so great a number of people, that a considerable town was built which, to this day, bears the name of the holy Abbot and hermit, Ægidius.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Ægidius fled from one place to another, to escape from the praises of men. Most persons act very differently. They seek empty honor, and vain praises, by the little good they do. Thus, in ancient times, acted the Scribes and Pharisees; this was the moving power of their prayers, fasts and alms-giving. "They do all their deeds that they may be honored by men," says Christ. But what benefit did they derive from it? The Saviour says: "They have received their reward." (Matt. vi.) This reward was the empty praise of men. They could have gained, by their good deeds, an eternal reward in heaven, if they had done them rightly, and out of love for God; but as they sought human praise, they received it as their reward in this world, without the hope of anything further in heaven. Do not follow their example. If you do kind or good deeds, as is your duty, do them not with the intention of being praised by men, but to glorify the Almighty; do them for love of Him. What avails all human praise? You can obtain so great a reward for your works in heaven; why then do you endeavor to obtain so miserable a one on earth? Where is the servant who would be satisfied with small wages when he is offered more? Hence every morning, begin the day with the intention that you will do and suffer for the honor of God all that is to be done and suffered. Renew this intention during the day, and say:

"All for the glory of my God: "or "Lord, for love of Thee!" In this manner, you will obtain for all your works, an eternal reward in heaven. Take heed, however, that you have this intention not only for those works which in themselves are good, as for instance, prayer, visits to the Churches, &c., but also, for those, which are in themselves neither bad nor good, as the labors which you perform according to your station in life, eating, drinking, sleeping, enduring heat or cold, &c. "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever else you do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Cor. x.)

II. How miraculously was St. Ægidius nourished and preserved in the desert by the Almighty! In times long gone by, God fed the prophet Elias by a raven; and in the time of the New Covenant, He nourished Ægidius by a hind. Thus does God deal with His faithful servants. Rather than abandon them, he works a miracle. If you desire of God your temporal sustenance, serve him faithfully, and labor according to your station in life, and He will surely give you all that is beneficial to you. An excessive care for temporal goods, and an immoderate grief in adversity are signs of very little trust in God. They are displeasing to the Almighty, and more hurtful to us than we are willing to believe. Hence, when Christ gave to those, who were too solicitous for their temporal welfare the parable of the lily and the spar-

row, both of which are clothed and fed by the Almighty, He exhorted them not to be solicitous, but to seek, before all things, the Kingdom of God, with the promise that, with it, they should receive all else they needed. If you believe in this promise of the Lord, divest yourself of all immoderate care and sadness. Seek first the kingdom of heaven, endeavor earnestly to serve your God, work to the best of your ability and place your trust in Providence. "Cast thy care upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." (Psalm liv.)

In regard to what I have said of the pious parents of Ægidius, I will add another instruction. Their principal care was, not to leave to their son great treasures and riches, but to lead him in the path of salvation. Oh, how happy was Ægidius to possess such parents, and how pleasing was their conduct in the sight of the Lord! There are parents who are anxious only to leave their children temporal goods, and they amass these in every possible manner, even by fraud, theft, injustice and other sinful means. With this end in view, they will not indemnify those whom they have wronged, on the plea that they must not leave their children in poverty. What blindness! What a deceit of Satan! It is true that parents are obliged to endeavor, according to their station, to save something for their children, which they may leave them after their death. Love for their children requires this, and parents commit great sin who neglect to do so. But to accumulate riches in an unjust manner in order to leave them to children, is unlawful, neither is it true love. It is not lawful, as one breaks the seventh commandment by obtaining wealth in such a manner. It is not true love, as it does not benefit the children, but harms them; for, the curse of the

Almighty rests upon riches unjustly acquired, which, therefore, cannot bring happiness to their possessors. If, notwithstanding all this, you will still call it love, it must be a disorderly, foolish, and wicked love; since such parents love their children more than God, as they offend Him for their children's sake and make themselves unhappy for all eternity, in order to give their children a short worldly prosperity. And who can tell if this dishonestly acquired wealth may not cause the children to lose heaven? Will such children thank their parents in hell for the false love that prompted the accumulation of riches for them by unjust means? If parents wish to show true love to their children, they should leave them only what they have justly obtained, though it be ever so little, and, with it, the blessing of God. For, as the Psalmist says: "Better is a little to the just, than the great riches of the wicked." (Psalm xxxvi.) The first care of parents should be to procure spiritual riches for their children. How this may be done, St. Salvian teaches. He exhorts in the words of St. Paul: "Bring up your children in the doctrines and fear of the Lord," and adds: "Attend well, ye parents, to the possessions which you should procure for your children: good instruction, the fear of God, virtue and piety. These are possessions that will truly enrich your children and give them happiness. Unjust riches give to the children but a short enjoyment, and bring upon both parents and children, eternal misery. How senseless it is," he continues, "to rob yourselves of the heavenly inheritance, in order to leave to your children one which is only temporal!" You will make your children rich, and thereby reduce yourselves and them to eternal beggary.

It is right that you should love your children; but love them not more than your own soul, not more than God. If you endeavor to educate your children piously, as the parents of St. Ægidius did, they

will be rich and happy; and for such love they will thank you in heaven. But for a false love they will curse you through all eternity.

NOTE.—This is the first day of the month. Forget not the advice I have given you elsewhere.

SECOND DAY OF SEPTEMBER.

ST. STEPHEN, KING OF HUNGARY.

St. Stephen, who is justly called the Apostle of the Hungarians, on account of his unwearied zeal in disseminating the true faith, was born in Hungary. His father, Geisa, was a renowned leader and general of the wild Huns and ruled over them with the title of Duke. Severely as he treated his heathen subjects, he was mild to the Christians who came into his dominions, and when God had bestowed upon him the grace of recognizing the truth of the Christian religion, he determined to establish it in his land. One day, when, occupied with this thought, he laid himself down, an angel appeared to him in his sleep, who announced to him that he would become father to a son, who was chosen by God to execute all that he was just now revolving in his mind. The angel further said, that on the following day, a messenger of God would come to him, whom he should receive, and to whose words he should listen with due reverence. A similar vision was shown, at the same time, to the wife of Geisa. St. Stephen, the protomartyr, appeared to her, and, among other things, told her to give his name to the child to whom she was soon to give birth. St. Adalbert, bishop of Prague, arrived on the following day. He instructed the duke and duchess in the truth and baptized them. The prince who was soon afterwards born, was joyfully received into the Church of the Lord by the holy bishop, who gave him, in Baptism, the name of Stephen. Geisa led an edifying life until he died.

When Stephen had arrived at manhood, and had taken the reins of government, he resolved most earnestly, to exterminate all idolatry among his people, and everywhere to plant the emblem of the Christians, the Cross. To be more secure in his pious undertaking, he formed an alliance with the neighboring princes in order to prevent them from assisting those of his subjects who might oppose his design. Notwithstanding this,

some of the Hungarian nobility dared to take up arms in defense of idolatry, and to make war against their legitimate Lord. St. Stephen, full of trust in the Almighty, met the rebels with his small force and defeated them so completely, that in future none ever dared refuse him obedience. The great and rich booty of which St. Stephen became possessed on this occasion, he appropriated to the building of a Monastery in honor of St. Martin, a native of Hungary. The Saint then invited from different Catholic lands, priests and religious men to Hungary to instruct the people. Those who were converted were favored with many privileges and immunities by the devout prince, while the refractory were dealt with in such a manner, that they were prevented from opposing others in embracing Christianity. In various cities and villages he erected Churches and Chapels, endowing them all richly. The number of the faithful grew in a short time so much, that he divided Hungary into ten dioceses, to all of which he endeavored to give holy bishops. He sent a certain bishop Anastasius to Rome, to request the Pope to confirm all he had done for the propagation of the Christian faith, and also to beg the holy Father to proclaim him King, so that he would be invested with greater power, happily to conclude the conversion of the entire country. During the night on which Anastasius arrived at Rome, an Angel informed the Pope of St. Stephen's request, and commanded him to give to the Saint's ambassador the crown which he had designed for another prince. Inexpressibly rejoiced at everything that Anastasius related to him, the Pope confirmed what St. Stephen had done to disseminate the faith of Christ, and granted him the privilege to act further as he and his bishops thought the welfare of the Church demanded. He also sent him the crown and a cross of gold which should be carried before him after the coronation. No sooner had Anastasius returned, than St. Stephen was solemnly anointed and crowned as first King of Hungary. After this he married Gisela, the sister of the holy emperor Henry, a princess not less talented than pious, who assisted him most assiduously in all his virtuous undertakings. Besides St. Stephen's apostolic zeal in spreading the true faith, his charity and generosity deserved the admiration of the world. He was almost prodigal in distributing alms, and spared neither his own garments nor the royal treasures. He often washed the feet of the poor, visited the hospitals during the night and served the sick. Many hours of the night he passed so devoutly in prayer, that he frequently went into ecstasy and was raised high above the earth. The hours of the day he devoted most earnestly to the affairs of the government, and every one of his subjects had free access

to him. He indulged neither in hunting, gaming, nor other similar amusements, giving all his time to the administration of the state and devout exercises; "for," said he, "they are more pleasing to me than hunting, gaming and whatever else may amuse a king." Towards the Queen of heaven, whom he called "My Lady," he was most devout from his tender youth and he chose her as patroness of Hungary. To her honor he built a most magnificent temple at Alba, where he resided. He built churches in her honor in several cities not in his dominions, as at Jerusalem, at Rome and at Constantinople, and to these he attached large convents. Hence, it is not surprising that the divine Mother protected her faithful servant, as the following events will prove. When the emperor Conrad II. invaded Hungary with his army, St. Stephen humbly begged his holy patroness to take him under her mighty protection. Then, at the head of his army, he went to meet the much stronger forces of the enemy. The following day, when every one expected that a battle would take place, an imperial message arrived, ordering all the generals of the emperor's army to retreat without showing any hostility to the Hungarians. In this manner, the king won a bloodless victory, which he gratefully ascribed to his heavenly patroness. In truth, the Queen of heaven had rescued him; for, the emperor knew nothing of the message nor the order it contained, and when his generals showed him his own hand and seal, he was convinced that St. Stephen was under the protection of a higher power, and marched away with his forces. At another time, four of the most distinguished noblemen entered into a plot against the holy king, and one of them came into the royal apartment during the night, to murder him. On entering, the dagger, which he had concealed under his cloak, fell upon the floor, and the noise of it aroused the king, who was sick. He asked who was there, and the man, trembling with fear, cast himself at his feet, discovered the plot, and entreated his pardon. Stephen recognized again the motherly protection of the Blessed Virgin, and out of love for her, pardoned him, but committed his accomplices into the hands of justice. Speaking of the sickness of the holy king, we must not omit to relate that God visited his servant, notwithstanding his fidelity and zeal, with great sorrows. He sent him a sickness which lasted three years, and what was still more painful, deprived him, by an early death, of all his children except one son. St. Stephen brought up this son, who was called Emeric, with the greatest care, and wrote, with his own hand, several instructions for him which he desired him to observe. Foremost among these were, that he should remain faithful to the Catholic

faith, protect and disseminate it ; that he should show due honor and obedience to the clergy ; that he should cherish his subjects ; attend to his prayers with fervor ; be generous to the poor and suffering ; deal out justice, and submit himself in adversity to the will of the Almighty. Emeric manifested in his conduct that he endeavored to live according to these holy precepts, and thus gave inexpressible peace and comfort to his father. The king daily begged the Almighty to preserve the life of this beloved son, that the Christian faith might have a protector in him. But this son also, whose holy life was an example of all Christian virtues, was destined to die before his father's eyes, whose grief was too great for words ; but greater still was his heroic resignation to the will of the Most High. He even conquered himself so far as to thank God that He had called his beloved son before him into the Kingdom of heaven.

The holy son was soon followed by the holy father. When his last hour, which God revealed to him, approached, he devoutly received the holy Sacraments, and then exhorted the bishops and the first men of the state to Christian charity and union ; to rule with justice ; to remain true to their faith ; and not only take the utmost care to protect this, the only faith instituted by Christ, but also to propagate it more and more. After this, the dying Saint turned his eyes to God and his blessed patroness, Mary, and addressing the latter, he said : " To thee, O Queen of heaven, and to thy guardianship, I commend the holy Church, all the bishops and the clergy, the whole kingdom, its rulers and inhabitants ; but before all, I commend my soul to thy care." In such devout sentiments, he died, on the festival of the Assumption of Our Lady, his greatly venerated patroness. He was truly a great king, adorned with all the virtues of a Christian. His holy body gave out a heavenly fragrance, and the health of many infirm was restored by touching the sacred relics. The hand with which the holy king had distributed so many generous alms, and which had done so many acts of kindness to the sick and the unfortunate, remained incorrupt long after his death.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. The whole life of St. Stephen shows that he labored much for the honor of God and the spiritual and temporal welfare of man ; and that he bore the crosses God laid upon him with Christian patience. For all this he now receives his reward</p>	<p>in heaven : because his intentions were always holy, and his heart was free from sin. If you desire to be rewarded for your good works, and for what you do and suffer, your intentions, while working and suffering, must be good, as was told to</p>
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you yesterday. But at the same time, you must be in a state of grace ; for, the holy church teaches : first, that we can earn a reward from God through our good works, because God has promised to recompense them. Secondly ; that we can gain heaven, or an eternal reward in heaven by our good works, if they are performed in the proper manner. The judgment which Christ pronounces on the last day when he will invite the just to take possession of the heavenly kingdom as a recompense for their good works, is sufficient proof of this. It is, however, also necessary to know that we must be in a state of grace, that is, not burdened with a mortal sin, if we desire to obtain heaven by our good works ; for, the grace of God is the root of all supernatural merits. When we perform our labors, or suffer, in a state of disgrace, in a mortal sin, we cannot expect, for such work or suffering, a reward in heaven, however good the works, or however bitter the suffering may have been. "And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor and have no charity, it profiteth me nothing," to gain an eternal reward. Thus writes St Paul (1. Cor. xiii.) Hence, if you desire an eternal reward for your works and your sufferings, take heed that you may be constantly in a state of grace.

II. The holy king continued his good works and his patient suffering in a state of grace until his last hour. Hence he now enjoys an eternal reward. Had he, in the last year, nay, even in the last hour of his life, committed a mortal sin and died in it, he would not have received a recompense in heaven either for his good works, or his sufferings. For, the true faith teaches that, by committing a mortal sin, we lose all the merits of the good works we had previously

performed. The words of God testify to the truth of this : "But if the just man turn himself from his justice and do iniquity all his justice which he hath done shall not be remembered and in his sin he shall die." (Ezekiel, xviii.) Learn from this what harm may be done by one mortal sin, and how earnestly we should endeavor to avoid it. If you were sure that you would lose all you possess, for which you have labored many years with care and pains, if you committed a mortal sin, tell me, would you consent to do it ? Most assuredly, you would not, unless you had lost all your good sense. Why then do you commit sin so wantonly when you are assured that you will thereby lose much greater possessions, even the entire treasure of your merits ? Is not this loss and the loss of heaven much more to be considered than that of all your temporal possessions ? Ah, consider this earnestly, and be not your own enemy ; do not injure yourself. "They that commit sin and iniquity, are enemies to their own souls." (Tobias, xii.) What has been said above is for every one ; but the following words are especially for those parents whom death early deprives of their children. Many are sad at this, they murmur and complain against God. They ought to remember the conduct of the holy king Stephen, when he lost his beloved, kind and pious son ; and they should endeavor to imitate him. That they should grieve or weep when death takes a child from them, is no sin, provided they remain within the limits of Christian patience and resignation. But to grieve immoderately, and to murmur and complain against God, is sinful. Tell me, you sad father, you weeping mother, who is it that has taken your child from you ? Is it not God, the Lord over the life and

death of all men? Does not your child belong more to the Almighty than to you? Does He wrong you by taking it from you? Not in the least. He is the Lord and Creator; He can take His own whenever He likes. Or shall He first ask your permission? Shall He account to you why He does it? I trust that you do not entertain so unreasonable a thought. Why then do you murmur and complain against your God? You must know that what God did, was done either out of love for the child, or, from love to you. Perhaps God, reading the future knew that by your immoderate love or the bad education you would give to your child, you would draw upon yourself eternal misery. Perhaps He saw that your child would become a slave to sin and

vice, and lose heaven. Is it not, therefore a sign of love towards you and your child, that God took it early to Himself? You ought to rejoice at the happiness it has attained, if it died in innocence. Could you have procured for him greater felicity? It ought surely to be enough for you to know that God demanded your child. The Lord called it away. What more can you require? If you will act sensibly, submit to the decrees of Providence, and confess before God, that you subject your will to His. Offer to Him the grief that death has caused you, and remember that all that God does is well done. Say with Holy Writ: "It is the Lord, let him do what is good in his sight." (1 Kings iii.)

THIRD DAY OF SEPTEMBER.

ST. SERAPIA AND ST. SABINA, MARTYRS.

St. Serapia was born at Antioch, the capital of Syria; but when the persecution of the Christians broke out, her parents went with her to Italy, where they both soon died. Serapia's hand was sought in marriage by several Roman youths, on account of her uncommon beauty and modest manners; but she desiring no other but the heavenly bridegroom, refused all riches and honors offered to her, and hired herself as servant to a noble widow named Sabina. This lady, although a pagan, was very respectable, and exercised herself in many good works. She stood high in favor at court on account of her late spouse, who had been an officer of great renown in the reign of the Emperor Vespasian. Serapia had hardly been two years in the service of Sabina, when she had so entirely won the heart of her mistress, that she was no longer treated as a servant but as a friend. Under these circumstances, it became easy to convince Sabina so thoroughly of the truth of the christian faith, that, recognizing the falsity of paganism, she was baptized and numbered among the faithful. After this, Serapia advised Sabina to leave the city

and go to one of her country seats, where she would have better opportunities to exercise herself in the christian religion. The newly converted widow, eager to assure herself of salvation, followed the advice, taking Serapia and a few other pious virgins with her. The life which these holy women led was truly holy. Serapia, born in the light of christianity, was to all a bright example of virtue. The persecution of the Christians under the Emperor Adrian began some years later, and Berillus, Governor of the Province, received the cruel order to torture and execute all who refused to sacrifice to the gods. Berillus resolved to commence with the society Sabina had formed, as the life of its members served to edify and animate all the Christians. Being informed that Serapia was the principal instructress of this society, he called her to him. She appeared, but was accompanied by Sabina. Although Berillus severely reproved Serapia for not having sacrificed to the gods, and for preventing others from doing so, he dare not say more in the presence of Sabina, and soon after dismissed them. Scarcely, however, had three days elapsed, when he had Serapia brought alone before him and commanded her immediately to sacrifice to the gods, if she wished to save her life. The pious virgin did not permit herself to be frightened, but answered courageously: "I am a Christian, and I honor no other but the true God. To Him alone I sacrifice, not to your false idols." "What is it you sacrifice?" asked Berillus; "and where is the temple of thy God?" "I sacrifice," said Serapia, "neither oxen nor calves, but myself, my body, my soul, my life. The temple of my God is my body, my soul. In this temple He dwells; for I have consecrated my virginity to Him. A chaste body, a chaste soul, is a temple of the Most High." Berillus laughed at this answer, and threatened entirely to destroy her temple. He had her cast into a narrow dungeon, and sent two debauchees to her to force her to vice and thus dishonor and ruin the so-called temple of the Lord. The horrible wretches hastened to the dungeon, entered it, and were about to lay their sacrilegious hands on the chaste virgin, when, raising her eyes towards heaven, she cried aloud: "Jesus Christ, my Saviour! Thou who hast desired to be born of a virgin, protect my virginal chastity, which I have entirely consecrated to Thee!" These words were hardly uttered, when the earth began to tremble and both the criminals sank dead to the ground. Berillus, informed of this, raved with anger, and ascribed the whole event to witchcraft. Serapia, however, said: "No, this was not done by witchcraft, but by the power of the God whom I worship." "If your God is so mighty," said Berillus, "obtain from him the restoration of these youths." Sera-

pia, sinking upon her knees, said a short prayer, and the dead were restored to life. Being present at so visible a miracle, the governor ought to have recognized that the God, whom Serapia worshipped, was the Lord of the living and the dead. But he ascribed this also to witchcraft, and ordered the garments to be torn from the chaste body of the virgin, and that she should be tortured with burning torches. The Christian heroine suffered this terrible martyrdom with invincible patience, and praised and glorified God with a loud voice, until the tyrant ordered her to be beheaded. This took place in the year of our Lord, 122. Sabina, the pious widow, almost envied her holy teacher the priceless grace of dying for the love of her heavenly bridegroom, and desired nothing but to give her life also for Him. This wish was at length gratified; for, the successor of Berillus, calling her into his presence, endeavored, by flatteries and kindness, to win her to forsake Christ. But as she remained firm in her confession, and hesitated not to place the nothingness of the gods before his eyes, he ordered her to be beheaded. The joy she expressed on hearing her death-sentence pronounced, is hardly to be described. Raising her hands and eyes upwards, she said: "I give thanks, infinite thanks, to Thee, O my God, for vouchsafing me the grace to die for Thy honored name. To Thy care I commend my soul." Then kneeling down, she offered her neck to the executioner, and received with firmness the fatal stroke.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. "A chaste body, a chaste soul, is a temple, a dwelling of God." These were the words of Serapia. Whose temple and whose dwelling is then the body and soul of the unchaste? Most certainly of no other than of him whose greatest delight is unchastity, as this draws thousands of souls into hell. See whether God or the devil dwells in your soul, and judge with whom your eternal home will be. God most miraculously protects a chaste soul, because it is His temple, His dwelling, as St. Serapia experienced. Satan precipitates unchaste souls into his dark abode, as many thousands have experienced. If you</p>	<p>desire to be guarded by the Almighty, and one day to inhabit heaven, take care that you keep your soul free from all stain, and give it to God as a permanent dwelling. Should you, however, be addicted to unchastity, and allow the impure spirit to abide long in your soul, tremble; for he will prepare a place for you in hell, where you shall live in eternal flames. You hope to drive him away some day, by penance, and to prepare your soul to be a dwelling of the Lord. But I fear that you deceive yourself, to your own great harm. For, as I have already remarked elsewhere, there is no vice from</p>
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which it is more difficult to tear ourselves by penance, when we have been long a slave to it, than the vice of unchastity. Persons who have been long addicted to it, either do not think at all of repentance, or their souls fall into so sad a condition, that they do not desire to do penance, or they think that it is too late to hope for pardon. "And I gave her time that she might do penance," says God of an unchaste person, "and she will not repent of her fornication." (Apoc. ii.) Hence, St. Cyprian rightly called unchastity, "the mother of impenitence." St. Chrysostom says that a lewd person cannot be moved to repentance, either by admonition, by menaces, or descriptions of heaven or of hell. "It is a greater miracle when a person, who has long lived an unchaste life, reforms, than when a legion of devils are exorcised from one possessed." Hence, what must be done? If the unclean spirit has dwelt until now in your soul, do not suffer him to do so one moment longer, but expel him by true penance. If he has never found an abode in you, receive him not at any future time. Avoid most earnestly the horrible and dangerous vice of unchastity.

II. Sabina, while yet a pagan, exercised herself in good works, and God brought her, by the persuasion of her servant, to the true faith. Understand it well! The good works of Pagans, Heretics and Jews merit not eternal life; as, according to the well-known words of the holy Apostle, it is impossible for such to please God. Also the good works performed by Catholics, when they are not in a state of grace, cannot merit heaven, as you were informed yesterday. It does

not, however, follow from this, that we should omit good works altogether, so long as we are either not in the true faith, or in a state of mortal sin; but that we should endeavor to convert ourselves to the true faith and gain by repentance the grace of the Almighty. It is further to be remarked, that although God does not recompense in heaven the good works performed either by heathens and Jews, or by Catholics living in mortal sin, He rewards them in this world. To those who are zealous in the practice of them, the infinite mercy of God often gives a long time to be converted and do penance. He averts punishment from them which otherwise they would have deserved, gives them many good inspirations and other graces that they may be converted and thus save their souls. These graces and inspirations they would not receive, if they omitted to do deeds of kindness and charity. Hence, non-Catholics, as well as Catholics living in mortal sin, should endeavor to do good works, as both will derive great benefit, by thus opening a way toward their conversion. The heathen Centurion, Cornelius, spoken of in the Acts, was devoted to prayer and alms-giving, and hence God called him to the true faith. The Prophet said to King Josaphat: "Thou didst indeed deserve the wrath of the Lord; but good works are found in thee!" (11 Paralip. xix.) On account of these, God averted the deserved punishment. Daniel advised the godless king Nabuchodonosor to redeem his sins with alms; (Daniel, iv.) in order that God might have pity, and bestow grace on him to do true penance and thus obtain the forgiveness of his sins.

FOURTH DAY OF SEPTEMBER.

ST. ROSALIA, VIRGIN.

St. Rosalia was born at Palermo, in Sicily. Her father was Sinibald, lord of Quisquina and Roses, and a descendant of Charlemagne. She was educated at court, but lived in such a manner, as if she had been brought up by pious nuns. All her actions were formed according to the precepts of the Gospel, and she resembled, in her devotion to God and the Saints, more an angel than a human being. She was very retiring in her habits, and found no pleasure in the tumult of the world, in riches, or in honors, but only in solitude, prayer, and devout reading. By this means, she preserved her innocence and purity unspotted amid so many dangers which surrounded her. When she perceived that her great beauty would surely induce many to seek her in marriage, she resolved to serve the Almighty in virginal chastity, and, therefore, secretly to leave the court. To execute this she cast herself before an image of the Blessed Virgin, beseeching her most fervently to strengthen and assist her. After this, she went away, filled with great comfort, and without acquainting any one of her intention. Guided by Providence, she came, at a considerable distance from Palermo, to a mountain, where she found a cavern in a rock, the entrance to which was very narrow. There she determined to make her dwelling. Above this cavern, she carved in the rock the words: "I, Rosalia, daughter of Sinibald, lord of Quisquina and Roses, have resolved to live in this cavern out of love to my Saviour, Jesus Christ." Four years the pious virgin lived in this place, whilst no one knew where she was; for, she guarded herself carefully, so as not to be seen, fearing she would be taken back to her father's residence. Her occupation consisted of prayer, praising the Most High, and contemplating the divine joys. But she was almost continually disturbed and tortured by Satan with fearful temptations. He endeavored to allure her back to her home; but the Christian heroine, aided by heaven, vanquished him happily by fasting and other austerities. She was frequently visited by Angels, by different Saints, by the Blessed Virgin, and by our Lord, all of whom comforted and animated her to continue the life she had begun.

At the end of four years, God sent her an Angel, who admonished her to leave her retreat and make her dwelling on

another mountain, known by the name of Monte Pellegrino, or Mount Pilgrim, which was near Palermo, and just opposite her father's residence. Here, with her father's domains under her eyes, she had ample opportunity to conquer the world and its vanities. In this mountain also she found a cavern, narrower and more gloomy than the other, and without any protection from the inclemency of the weather. The water, which dropped continually from the rock, gave her the greatest discomfort. No traces of any living being were to be found around her, and yet, where even an animal would not make his den, where no man dared to place his foot, the delicately nourished Rosalia made her dwelling, because God had chosen the place for her. The entrance was narrow, and although there was plenty of space inside, yet only one nook was free from the ceaselessly dropping water, and in this the high-born maiden crouched—a dove, hidden in a cleft of the rock—sighing for her heavenly spouse. There she remained in austerity and holiness during the rest of her life. Her sustenance was some wild herbs which grew near by. Lonely, sad and awful as it might have been for any other human being, it was not so for Rosalia; for she was honored more frequently than before by heavenly visitors, and was even several times strengthened by the bread of life from the hand of an Angel. She lived more happily in this dark cavern than in her father's palace, surrounded by all the splendor of temporal greatness and wealth. It cannot be denied that, at times, she became weary of her desolate and poor existence; but in such moments, she raised her eyes to the crucifix, crying aloud: "From love to my Lord! Out of love to Thee, my God!" These words she repeated in every dark hour, and they animated her with new zeal in the service of the Most High.

At last, an Angel was sent to announce to her the hour of her death. The fervent love of God which filled her heart, the intense desire to see her Saviour in heaven, and the visible presence of the divine Mother and holy Angels, made death inexpressibly sweet to her. Hence, she laid herself down in the cavern, her head resting on her right hand, while the left held a crucifix and a rosary to her bosom; and thus she calmly expired.

God made her wonderful life known to the world by several revelations, and five hundred years afterwards He revealed the place where her holy body was lying. It was found in its rocky tomb, covered with crystal, as the water, which for several hundred years had dropped on her, had caused her to become crystalized. This discovery was made in 1623, to the great consolation and benefit of the whole city of Palermo, at that period ravaged by a terrible pestilence, which daily carried off from

seventy to a hundred persons. It was revealed to a pious inhabitant of Palermo that the city would not be relieved from this scourge, until the body of St. Rosalia was brought within its walls. The precious relics were, therefore, brought, in solemn procession, into the city, which from that hour was free from the pestilence. On this account, St. Rosalia is still invoked and honored as a guardian against pestilence.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Rosalia despised the pleasures, honors and riches of the world and found her only joys in solitude, prayer and devout reading. She occupied herself constantly in these pious exercises. How wonderful: The Saints delight not in that which is the greatest delight to most men. They flee and hate what the children of the world seek and love, and are devoted and attached to what the others avoid and despise. They enjoy what the world considers tedious and burdensome. Can an equal ending be expected from such unequal conduct? Answer this yourself. Whence came it that St. Rosalia rejoiced in solitude, and especially in prayer and devout reading? She loved God. Those who love God, love to converse with Him; and this can be done much better in solitude than in the tumult of the world. Those who love God love to speak with Him, and this is done in prayer. Those who love God, love to listen to His Word: His voice is heard in spiritual reading. It is a sure sign that you do not love God, if prayer or reading devout books is distasteful to you. You like to converse long and often with those who are dear to you: you seek opportunities to speak with them and listen to their words; time seems not to drag heavily, you become not weary when you are thus occupied. Would you not conduct yourself in the same manner towards God, if you loved Him? Act thus, at least, in future. Or, tell me does

the society, the conversation of men impart greater comfort, greater benefit to you, than you would derive from God in prayer and devout reading?

II. "From love to my Lord. Out of love to my God." This was the constant cry of St. Rosalia's lips and heart. She loved God, and loved Him truly above everybody and everything. For Him she had left all, even those things that she might have enjoyed without sin. For love of Him, she led so austere a life, although she was a princess most tenderly brought up. You are obliged to love God above all; you have reason for it. Besides, this is His command. He is your Lord, your Creator, your Redeemer, your Benefactor, the highest Good, and in Himself worthy of all love and honor. Have you fulfilled your duty in regard to this? I hear you say, in the words of St. Francis Xavier: "O Lord, my God! I love Thee: but I do not love Thee because Thou hast saved me, neither because whoever loves Thee not, shall burn in hell." It is right that you speak so, and I wish you often to repeat those words: but—words are not deeds. St. Rosalia manifested in works that she loved God above all. You must show in your actions that you love the Almighty above everybody and everything, or I cannot believe your words. I do not ask you to do all that St. Rosalia did for her Lord; but, tell me, would it be too much if I

<p>requested of you, for the love of God, to abstain sometimes even from an allowable pleasure ; to turn your eyes from this or that worldly vanity ; to bear patiently the heat of the summer, the cold of the winter ; to do good to your enemy ; to avoid idle gossip ; to give more time to prayer or to listening to the word of God ; to bear, without murmur or complaint, the Cross God has seen fit to lay upon you ? Your Saviour has done and suffered so much out</p>	<p>of love to you ; it was for your sake, that He abstained from all temporal enjoyments ; and you refuse to do the least act of self-abnegation for Him ? Oh ! do not again protest that you love God, if you hesitate to follow my advice. Deeds must prove love. "Love must act and do great deeds ; otherwise it is not true love ;" says St. Gregory. Much less is it true love, if it will not do little things for the Almighty.</p>
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FIFTH DAY OF SEPTEMBER.

ST. LAWRENCE JUSTINIAN, PATRIARCH OF VENICE.

St. Lawrence was a descendant of the noble house of Giustiniani, greatly famed at Genoa, Venice and Naples. He was born 1380, of very pious parents, but early lost his father, Bernard. His mother, on whom now devolved the education of her children, redoubled her care, but Lawrence gave her very little trouble, as he was naturally inclined to virtue. One day, she made him understand that she feared he harbored ambition or pride secretly in his heart ; but he answered : "fear not, mother ; I have only one ambition, and that is to become a great servant of the Lord, and to be more pious than my brothers." His conduct in youth bore witness to his words ; for though he lived at a period when the morals of the whole city were very corrupt, his edifying life was regarded by every one with surprise and admiration.

To escape the danger which threatened him, he prayed most fervently to God to give him the grace to know the vocation to which he was called. While, one day, kneeling before a crucifix and an image of the Blessed Virgin, he said his prayers for this intention, he felt deep within him an intense desire to leave the world, and to serve God in the religious state. He obeyed the heavenly voice, renounced the world and all its allurements, went to the Regular Canons of St. George, in Alga, an island near Venice, and requested to be received among their number. His request was granted, and he began his novitiate cheerfully ; but he soon manifested in his conduct that he was no beginner in the science of holiness, but a proficient. His superiors had much

more difficulty in moderating his zeal than in animating it. Amongst other austerities which he practised to mortify himself, it was specially noticed that, even on the coldest days, he never warmed himself by the fire, and that, in summer, he took nothing to allay his thirst except with his meals at noon and evening. He was never seen taking the air in the convent garden, or enjoying the beauty and fragrance of the flowers. The only time when he visited his home was when he was called to see his dying mother. Still more to be admired is the fortitude with which he bore a very painful and dangerous operation on his throat for the removal of a great tumor. He himself encouraged the surgeon to begin fearlessly. "Cannot Christ," said he, "give me as much fortitude as He gave to the three youths in the furnace?" Not even a sigh escaped him during the operation he repeated only the names of Jesus and Mary. When those present uttered their profound astonishment at his self-control, he said: "How little is my suffering compared with that of the holy martyrs, who were tortured with burning torches and red-hot irons, or roasted over a slow fire."

After Lawrence had been ordained priest, he daily said Mass with great devotion and seldom without tears. During the Mass on Christmas-night, heaven bestowed upon him the grace to behold his Saviour in the form of a lovely child, to the inexpressible comfort of his heart. Although he desired to remain free from all offices of honor, he was chosen general of his order, and sometime later was nominated bishop of Venice, by Pope Eugenius IV. The humble servant of the Almighty endeavored in every possible manner to escape this dignity; but at last obliged by obedience, he accepted it. As bishop, he altered nothing of the austerities he had practised in the monastery; he visited his whole diocese, and with apostolic zeal, animated his flock to observe the Commandments of God and the Church. His income he used for the benefit of the Church and the relief of the poor. Besides several collegiate Churches, he founded fifteen religious houses, and daily fed a great number of poor. The answer he gave to one of his relatives, who requested a contribution out of the Episcopal revenues as a marriage-portion for his daughter, must not be omitted. "It will not satisfy you if I give you but little," said he; "and if I give you much, you alone will receive it, and many others will have nothing. No, the Episcopal revenues must not be used for worldly luxuries, but to comfort the needy. Be not offended, therefore, that I cannot fulfil your desire." Thus spoke the holy bishop, whom Pope Nicholas V. soon after raised to a still higher dignity.

The Patriarch of Grado died; and as the Pope desired to

nominate Lawrence as his successor, but was convinced at the same time, that the Venetians would not consent to part with their bishop, he transferred the Patriarchal chair to Venice, and declared St. Lawrence the first Patriarch of Venice. This city had indeed great reason to use all possible means not to lose the Saint, as only on his account God averted a terrible and well-deserved punishment from its walls. There lived at that time, in the Island of Corfu, a hermit, famous for his holiness, who, one day, said to a Venetian noble, who visited him: "The inhabitants of Venice have provoked God's wrath, by despising His words, and had not the tears of your Patriarch cried to Him, you would all have long since gone to destruction like the inhabitants of Sodom."

While the holy Patriarch was assiduously occupied with the functions of his high station, his strength gradually gave way and he felt his end approaching. On the feast of the Nativity of Christ, he felt, during Holy Mass, an intense desire to be admitted into the presence of his God. A fever, which seized him soon after Mass, ended with his death in a very few days. He lay on the bare floor, and not even in his last days could he be persuaded to make use of a softer bed. "Jesus Christ," said he, "died upon the hard wood of the Cross, and you desire that a sinner, like me, should lie soft and comfortable!" After receiving the holy Sacraments, he gave his last instructions to those around him. "Keep the Commandments of the Lord," said he; "nothing is more noble or excellent than to serve God." After having finished his discourse, he raised his eyes to heaven and said: "I am coming, O my Jesus!" and his soul went to God. Thus ended, in the seventy-third year of his age, the earthly career of this great and holy Patriarch. That his life in heaven had begun, was known by the manner in which the Lord honored his holy body, from which emanated a heavenly fragrance; as also, by the miracles which, at the intercession of the Saint, took place at his tomb, in favor of the infirm and the possessed.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

Before I give to your special consideration several points of the life of this Saint, I must remind you of what you have just read about the preservation of Venice from destruction, by reason of the prayers of St. Lawrence. Learn from this that pious persons may be the greatest public benefactors, and that God has frequently averted, in their be-

half, well deserved punishment from cities and even whole Kingdoms. Thus He promised to protect Jerusalem from destruction, in consideration of His faithful servant, David. "I will protect this city for my own sake, and for David, my servant's sake." (IV. Kings, xx.) Judge from this, how wrong they are, who imagine and say, that religious Orders,

among whose members there are many pious and faithful servants of the Lord, are of no profit to communities, but only a burden. If many cities, many states, had been deprived of such intercession with God, who knows if the earth would not long since have swallowed them, or if they would not have been destroyed by fire from heaven, by famine, pestilence or war? Pious priests, pious religious, by their prayers, their works for the salvation of men, have averted such punishments. Can you, therefore, say they are useless, or a burden to the community?

Consider, further, that Venice should have been punished for disregarding the word of God. The inhabitants were slothful in hearing the Gospel: they disregarded it, and were present rather at plays and similar amusements, than at sermons. They respected not the priests, who expounded the Gospel to them, but they blamed, slandered or otherwise persecuted them. This aroused the wrath of the Most High, and He was about to punish the offence done to Him by the destruction of the entire city. I say the offence done to Him: for, disregard of the word of God and of those who teach it, is an offence offered to the Majesty of the Most High, just as it is an affront to a king, or others set above us, when we do not respect their will and when we insult those who make it known to us. God speaks to us, at the present time, by His priests, as He spoke in the Old Testament by the Prophets, and in the New by the Apostles, to whom Christ said: "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me." (Luke, x.) Hence, all those who despise the word of God or His priests, despise the Almighty Himself: a most grievous wrong to Him, which will surely draw after it a

great punishment. It is awful to read what Christ says of those who neither receive the Apostles, nor listen to their instructions. "Amen, I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha, in the day of Judgment, than for that city." And soon after, Christ said of the cities, in which the inhabitants listened to the Gospel, but did not live in accordance with its teachings: "Woe to thee, Corozain, woe to thee, Bethsaida; for if in Tyre and Sidon the miracles had been wrought, that have been wrought in you, they had long ago done penance in sack-cloth and ashes. But I say unto you: it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of Judgment, than for you. And thou, Capharnaum, that art exalted up to heaven, shalt go down even unto hell; for if in Sodom had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in thee, perhaps it had remained unto this day. But I say unto you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of Judgment, than for thee." (Mark, ix.) The menace of Christ to these cities and their inhabitants should be taken to heart by those who are slothful in listening to the word of God, or who disregard those who expound it, and lend no willing ear to their admonitions. I now come to those points, in the Life of St. Lawrence Justinian, which especially call for a closer consideration, in order that we may imitate them.

I. St. Lawrence cheered himself in his sufferings by recollecting those of the holy martyrs. "What are the pains I endure," said he, "in comparison with those endured by the martyrs?" If you have to bear anything, use the same means. Think or say to yourself: "What is this, my pain, my anguish, compared with the sufferings of the Saints? What is my agony in com-

parison with what my Saviour bore for love of me?" Descend also, in imagination, into hell, and ask yourself: "What are my torments compared with those endured in hell: and what should I not suffer in hell if the Almighty had taken me from earth in my sins?" If you will meditate on these three points, it will be impossible for you to complain about your suffering. All will appear easy and trifling to you, as it is in reality, if contrasted with what Christ and the Saints suffered, and what the damned in hell have to endure.

II. The last instruction of St. Lawrence was: "Keep the Commandments of the Lord;" a short but very comprehensive lesson, on the observance of which everything depends. Those who conform their lives to it, will surely go to heaven, as those who neglect it, will go to hell. Some expect to gain salvation by other means and thus escape hell. They imagine, for instance,

that when they wear a blessed scapular about their neck, keep certain fast-days during the year, or daily say certain prayers, they will certainly save their souls, although they are otherwise but little concerned about keeping the laws of God. What wrong ideas are these! how dangerous a delusion of Satan! It is praiseworthy and beneficial to wear a sacred scapular, and to observe other pious practices; but it is most certain that by doing so, we shall not escape hell, nor gain heaven, without keeping the Commandments of the Lord. These must be adhered to before all else, as they are the surest, the most necessary means for our salvation. Hence your first, your greatest care must be to observe them, and as the Lord also commands you to obey His Church, you must also follow her. Imprint this lesson deeply into your heart, and live in accordance with it. "They are cursed who decline from thy Commandments." (Psalm cxviii.).

SIXTH DAY OF SEPTEMBER.

ST. REGINA, VIRGIN AND MARTYR.

St. Regina was born in the year 238, of heathen parents. Having lost her mother soon after her birth, she was entrusted by her father to a nurse who happily was a Christian, although this fact was unknown to him. He left the entire care and education of his beloved child to this pious woman, whose only object was to make a devout Christian of her little charge. Hence, as soon as the light of reason began to dawn in the child's mind, she taught her to respect the Christian faith, and as God had gifted Regina with great intelligence, it was not long before she recognized the nothingness of the idols, and the truth of our holy religion. This knowledge was followed by the resolution to become a Christian and to be secretly baptized. As the solicitous nurse knew that Regina's father would raise a furious storm when

he became aware of what had happened, she endeavored to prepare the newly-baptized Regina for the martyrdom in store for her. She related to her the torments so many tender youths and maidens had endured for the Christian faith; how heroically they had suffered, and how miraculously they had been strengthened by the Almighty; she told her of the great happiness of suffering for Christ's sake, and how great a recompense was in store for those who gave their lives for the confession of their faith. She also explained to her the inexpressible value of virginal purity so eloquently, that Regina hesitated not to consecrate her virginity to the Almighty. The desire to gain the crown of martyrdom was also awakened in the heart of the tender maiden by the words of the pious nurse, and she prayed daily to God to grant her the grace to die for Christ's sake. As she was actuated in all she did by the thought of pleasing the Almighty, her conduct was such that every one admired and esteemed her.

Her father, ignorant of the fact that she was a Christian, loved her most devotedly, and was anxious to secure her happiness by a suitable marriage. When he informed her of this, she said to him: "Dear father, I know that you love me, and that you only seek my happiness by wishing to give my hand to the young man of whom you speak. But if I knew some one who would make me still happier, would you oppose my being united to him?" "So far from it," answered the father, "that I should be rejoiced at it. But where will you find him?" "I have already found him," said Regina. "It is Jesus Christ, my Saviour. Him have I chosen; to Him I have pledged my constancy and my faith." Stunned at this confession, the father, at first, knew not what to reply. Having controlled himself somewhat, he exclaimed: "Can it be possible, my daughter, that you are a Christian? Have you allowed yourself to be so bewitched, as to embrace so despicable a faith? Never will I give my consent to it. Consider quickly whether you will see in me your executioner or your father." Regina answered fearlessly: "I am not bewitched. The Christian faith is not despicable; it conduces to one's greatest honor to be counted among the faithful. I need no time for consideration; I am a Christian and as such will I live and die." Too much enraged to hear or say more, her father left her, and Regina hastened to her nurse to inform her of what had taken place. The latter embraced her joyfully and congratulated her on so courageous a beginning, but also admonished her to pray earnestly for strength from above, to enable her to conquer in the approaching combat. Regina obeyed and, as predicted by the nurse, her struggle soon commenced: for,

her father endeavored to draw her from Christ by alternate kind and earnest words, by caresses and by menaces. All, however, proved unavailing; Regina remained firm in her resolution to live and die a virgin and a Christian.

At that time, Olibrius, who was governor of Gaul, came from Marseilles to Alise, where Regina resided. Having heard of Regina, he immediately sent for her, and informed her that he desired to make her his consort, and hoped not to be refused, as she could not expect a marriage that could either give her greater happiness or raise her to a higher dignity. Regina, although treating him with the utmost politeness, told him frankly, that she had already attained higher felicity, as she had become a Christian and had chosen Christ as her spouse. Olibrius, provoked beyond measure at this reply, and perceiving that neither flatteries nor threats could alter her resolution, ordered her to be cast into a dungeon, and to be chained in such a manner, that she could neither sit nor lie down. For one month she endured this torture, during which time she was persecuted by her father and other relatives to deny Christ; but all was useless. Their words made no impression on Regina, who regarding herself most blessed to suffer for Christ's sake, prayed only to God to give her grace to die for the true faith. Olibrius had her stretched upon the rack and so cruelly scourged, that all who witnessed it were filled with pity, and began loudly to murmur against the barbarous sentence. Fearing that the people might revolt, the governor remanded her to prison.

The Christian heroine, who passed the night in prayer, had, at the close of it, a most consoling vision. She saw a large cross which reached from the earth up into heaven. A bright dove was upon it and she distinctly heard the words: "Rejoice, thou beloved spouse of Christ! Thy virginity and patience have prepared a crown for thee, which thou wilt soon receive. Thy cross and suffering will become a ladder upon which thou wilt ascend to heaven." Oh! how the virgin's heart was comforted by this vision! In accordance with an order of Olibrius, she was again stretched on the rack, on the following day, and after her bruised and wounded body had been most barbarously tortured with burning torches, they placed her in a bath of cold water. During this martyrdom she no longer felt pain, but addressing those around her, she exhorted them to be converted to the only true God whom she worshipped. During this speech, she saw the same dove which had appeared to her in the prison, carrying a precious crown in its beak; and as it came towards the holy martyr, she heard a voice saying: "Come, Regina, and reign with your spouse in heaven." More than 800 pagans were,

on this occasion, converted to the Christian faith. Olibrius, however, remained obdurate, and at length ordered Regina to be beheaded. Thus this Christian heroine ended her life gloriously, in her sixteenth year.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Regina had, next to God, to thank her nurse for her conversion to the true faith, as also her desire for martyrdom and her constancy during the same; hence she owed her salvation to her nurse's pious care. How much good is sometimes done by persons of apparently little consequence! What good might not domestics of both sexes do to each other and still more to the children in their charge, by giving them wholesome exhortations, keeping them from evil, and leading them in the path of rectitude! And how much evil can they cause by holding unchaste discourses in the presence of children, or perhaps by even tempting them to do wrong! Parents may well be careful in selecting those to whom they trust their children; for it is nothing unusual, at the present day, that they are the seducers of children, who were chosen to keep guard over them. Out of the house with such servants! Children ought immediately to inform their parents if any one tempts them to do wrong. Servants and teachers of both sexes ought to remember the terrible account they will have to render on the Judgment-day, if they have kept their young charges from the way of virtue and led them in the road to destruction. They should on the contrary, endeavor to walk before them with a good example. "But he that shall scandalize one of those little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drown-

ed in the depth of the sea," says Christ our Lord. (Matt. xviii.)

II. The preservation of her virginity and her patience have secured, in heaven, a crown for St. Regina. I do not doubt that you have to bear a cross, that you have to suffer, and if you have not now, it will come to you in due time. But will your cross prove to you a ladder by which to ascend to heaven? The manner in which you bear your misfortunes will decide it. If you bear them, like St. Regina, from love to God, with patience, without murmuring, they will prove a ladder leading you upward to the glories of heaven; but if you bear them not according to the spirit of Christianity, they will be a ladder by which you will descend into the darkness of hell. Which do you prefer? You must suffer; the cross must be borne. Suffer patiently and you will enter heaven; while by murmuring against Providence, you commit sin, and may go to eternal destruction. Patience and the preservation of her chastity have prepared in heaven a crown for St. Regina; impatience and unchastity prepare a place in hell for numberless souls. Regina would rather have suffered the most unheard-of torments, than have lost her virginal purity. What do you say of this, if you are one of those, who, for some trifling temporal good, or a short sensuality, have lost forevermore this inestimable treasure, and besides this, do not even deplore so great a loss? Ah! weep tears of blood as long as

you live, for this blindness, this folly ; and surely you have sufficient cause. Pray humbly to the Almighty to forgive you, and to bestow upon you the grace to obtain, by true repentance, the crown which you can no longer gain by virginal chastity. "Let us weep over sin only," says St. Chrysostom. "Blessed are those who weep not for the dead, nor for temporal losses, but over their iniquities." But if you still possess the priceless treasure of virginity, give humble thanks to God, and resolve rather to lose all your temporal possessions, yes, even your life, than to be deprived of it by sin. "Your virginal chastity is your greatest wealth, your most priceless, your irreparable treasure," writes St. Jerome. It is a treasure which will obtain for you an especial glory in Heaven !

SEVENTH DAY OF SEPTEMBER.

ST. CORBINIAN, BISHOP OF FRISINGEN.

St. Corbinian was born in the department of Melun, in France. He was the son of wealthy parents, and passed his youth in great innocence and piety. Desiring to serve God and also to induce others to do the same, he built a cell near the Church of St. Germain, in which he spent fourteen years in great holiness. The fame of his virtue and wisdom drew a great many persons to him, who either sought his advice in matters of difficulty, or who came to request his prayers. This greatly displeased the Saint, who desired to serve God in solitude and quiet. Hence he went to Rome, and requested the Pope to give him a place not far from St. Peter's, where he might live unknown to the world. The Holy Father concluded, from his manner and address, that he was a man of great virtue and abilities ; and was no sooner convinced of this, than he made Corbinian priest and afterwards bishop. After this, the Pope bade him return, and exercise his episcopal functions for the salvation of souls wherever he was needed.

Corbinian submitted to the decrees of Providence, obeyed the Pope, and journeyed home through Lombardy and a great part of France, preaching everywhere with eminent success. The holiness of Corbinian, and the miracles which the Almighty wrought through him, caused everybody to esteem and honor him. To avoid this, he returned to his former dwelling and remained there several years. When, however, it became known where he was, and the people again commenced to come to him, he undertook a second journey to Rome. God led him this time through Bavaria, to the great benefit of its inhabitants ; for,

when the holy bishop perceived the ignorance of the people in matters of faith, he immediately began to instruct them. The pious Duke, Theodore, who at that period reigned in Bavaria, was greatly rejoiced at the good results of the Saint's apostolic labors, and desired him to remain in his domains. The same was also desired by Grimoald, a son of the Duke, whose residence was at Frisingen. Corbinian, hastening to Rome, besought the Pope to release him from his episcopal dignity, which request, however, was not granted, and the holy father admonished him to continue zealously in his labors for the salvation of souls. Hence, Corbinian returned to Bavaria. At Mais, a borough and castle not far from Meran, which at that time belonged to Bavaria, he remained several days at the tomb of St. Valentine, who had been bishop of Passau. Grimoald, who had been informed of his arrival, sent messengers to meet him and invite him to Frisingen. The Saint accepted the invitation, but hearing afterwards, that the Duke lived unlawfully with Pilitrudis, the wife of his deceased brother, he sent one of his companions to say that he would not set foot in the palace, until so enormous a scandal was removed. He added that the words of the Apostle were and would be eternally true: "Neither fornicators nor adulterers shall possess the kingdom of heaven." Pilitrudis, greatly incensed at the holy bishop's fearless message, resolved, like another Herodias, to hire an assassin and secretly murder him. But the exhortations of the priest, whom the Saint had sent to Grimoald, made so deep an impression upon the Duke and Pilitrudis, that both, recognizing and repenting of their fault, threw themselves at the feet of Corbinian and promised to reform their lives. The Saint received them kindly and earnestly advised them to do penance and give alms.

After this, the bishop officiated for some time in the Church of Frisingen, converting the wicked, inducing the lukewarm and slothful to be more solicitous for their salvation; and animating the pious and zealous to still greater fervor, by his sermons, admonitions and exhortations. Pilitrudis, however, returned to her former vicious life, and, not to be disturbed in her misdeeds, she ordered one of her minions, named Ninus, to kill Corbinian. But before Ninus had surrounded the palace of the bishop with his soldiers in order to execute his design, Corbinian, having been informed of it, made his escape. Arrived at Mais, the holy prelate announced to Grimoald and Pilitrudis, the divine punishment that would soon overtake them. His prophecy was soon fulfilled. Grimoald was assassinated by one of his subjects, and Pilitrudis, deprived of rank and wealth, ended her life in misery, which she had drawn upon herself by her vicious con-

duct. Ninus, also, who intended to assassinate the Saint, received his deserts; he was stabbed, and thus unprepared was called before the Judgment-seat of the Almighty. Hugibert, a younger son of the pious Duke Theodore, who succeeded Grimoald in the government, besought the holy bishop most earnestly to return to his see, and to forgive the wrongs done to him. The Saint consented, returned to Frisingen, and was received with universal rejoicing by the inhabitants of the city. Hardly had he arrived, when God revealed to him his last hour. After having satisfactorily arranged all the affairs of his See, he clothed himself in his episcopal robes, on the day which was to be his last upon earth, went to Church, and said Mass. Returning home, he took some slight repast, blessed himself, and calmly expired, in the presence of some priests, without having been sick, and without giving any signs of pain or suffering. His holy body was buried, with great solemnities, in the Cathedral; but as the Saint had desired to have his tomb erected at Mais, the Almighty plainly manifested that this wish should be fulfilled; for, soon after the funeral, the rain began to fall in torrents, and ceased not, until the sacred relics of Corbinian had been carried to the spot which he had chosen as his resting-place. When, fifty years later, the Lombards made an inroad into Tyrol, and devastated the land, the pious bishop Aribo exhumed the holy body again and brought it back to Frisingen, where it is still greatly venerated.

This Saint is generally represented with a bear at his side, the reason of which is as follows: When the Bishop made his second journey to Rome, and was obliged to remain one night in the open air, with those who accompanied him a bear attacked his horse which was laden with what the Saint needed on his journey. Corbinian, who did not arrive at the place where this happened until the horse was partly devoured, commanded the bear, in the name of the Most High, to take the burden which the horse had carried, and bring it to Rome. The animal obeyed and patiently carried the burden laid upon his back, to the end of the journey. Numerous persons witnessed this. It was evidently the desire of the Almighty to glorify His faithful servant by this, as well as by several other not less remarkable events.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. St. Corbinian admonished Grimoald and Pilitrudis on account of their criminal conduct. He did this, without doubt, from love to God, and also from love to these</p>	<p>two sinners, whose destruction he foresaw and pitied. At first, both appeared to receive the admonition willingly and to repent, but soon they returned to their vicious</p>
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life and endeavored to repay good with evil. If you have an opportunity to exhort others, do it from love to God and to your neighbor, to prevent the offense of God, and your neighbor's destruction. Should anyone give you an admonition, receive it kindly, especially when it comes from your confessor and pastor, who are obliged to admonish you, and who in so doing, seek only your welfare. Why then should you complain of it, why be offended? "It is better to be corrected by a wise man, than to be deceived by the flatteries of a fool," says the Holy Ghost. St. Chrysostom writes; "A sick man acts foolishly when he complains of a physician who prescribes to him some remedy, useful or necessary for his health." Much more foolishly do you act, when you complain of your confessor, spiritual advisor or pastor, who corrects your faults, out of love for you, and the desire to save your soul. You may well believe that Grimoald and Piligrinus have, for a long time, repented in the other world, for not having followed St. Corbinian's admonition. Many suffer in hell because they heeded not the exhortations of their confessors. Take care that you do not find yourself among them.

II. St. Corbinian died happily, because he was always prepared to die. There are a great many persons who defer their preparations for death and their penance until the last hour has come. They think that the best time to do penance will be when they are sick. How blind they are! Who has promised that a sickness should be the forerunner of their death? Is it then impossible that they should die suddenly, as has happened to so many? But even if they should become sick, may it not be a disease that

will rob them of their reason, or be so painful that they will be unable to remember their sins and to confess them rightly? How will they, under such circumstances, prepare themselves for death? And furthermore, who knows if they will at that time, desire to prepare themselves? Satan will whisper to them that there is no danger, that they will soon be restored to health. Their relatives and acquaintances, actuated by false compassion, will speak in a similar manner. Many have thus been deceived. Be this as it may, one thing is certain: a late repentance is seldom a true repentance. The time of death, the time of sickness, is not the proper time for so great, so important an act as the preparation for death, on which depends all eternity. If you wish to be sure, prepare yourself in time, and defer not your penance until your end. The words of St. Augustine are true: "The penance of a sick person, is a sick penance, and that of a dying I fear, is a dying or a dead one. Hence, whoever would seek the mercy of God, let him do penance while his body and mind are in a state of health, that he may find salvation in the world to come." Elsewhere this great and holy teacher says: "As it is unknown to us at what hour we shall be called away, let us without delay, hasten from the left hand to the right. We must neither trust to health nor to age. Whoever is uncertain of his life, must not defer using the means that will assure his salvation. He who assures us that a sinner will receive pardon for his iniquities whenever he repents, warns us at the same time when he says: "Delay not to be converted to the Lord and defer it not from day to day." (Eccles. v.) Let us therefore hasten to convert ourselves while the means are still in our power.

EIGHTH DAY OF SEPTEMBER.

THE NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

The Catholic Church, in the liturgy of this day, justly admonishes all the faithful to rejoice, saying: "Let us celebrate joyfully the nativity of the Blessed Virgin!" The cause of this rejoicing she explains while she addresses the Queen of heaven, as follows: "Thy birth, O Holy Mother of God, has brought joy to the whole world; for from thee has risen the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our Lord." She means by this, as several Fathers have taught, that the Blessed Virgin was like the dawn of day which precedes the sun and announces his coming to the world. A man, who has lost his way in a dark forest, and wandered in it all night, longs for the rising of the sun, and when he sees the dawn, he rejoices, for he knows that the sun is near. During many centuries, the world was shrouded in darkness, and man sighed, with painful longing, for the Sun of Righteousness to arise and dispel the gloom. At length, on this day, in the nativity of the Blessed Virgin, we receive the assurance that the sun, so long expected, will soon rise. Hence the Church exhorts us justly to commemorate the birth of Mary with gladness.

Nazareth was the native place of the Blessed Virgin, and the house in which she first saw the light of the world, and which is called the "Holy House" by all the faithful, is still to be seen at Loretto, in Italy. The holy parents of Mary were Joachim and Anna. Although leading a most pious life, they were many years without issue, and when after long continued and most fervent prayers, God seemed still not to hear them, they submitted to His holy will. At length, when they had already grown old, God sent an Angel who announced to them that they would have a daughter, who, blessed by the Almighty above all women, should become the mother of the long-promised Messiah, and whose name should be Mary. Although Holy Writ says nothing of this apparition, it cannot be doubted; for if the Almighty announced the birth of John, the forerunner of Christ, and appointed the name by which he should be called, must we not believe that He did the same before the birth of the Saviour's Mother? Great as was the joy of St. Joachim and St. Ann at this announcement, their gratitude to God was not less for the promised grace. The words of the Angel were fulfilled. St. Ann, who had been barren so many years, gave birth to a

daughter, who, in course of time, became the Blessed Mother of our Saviour. According to Divine command, they called her Mary; for, God wished to make manifest by this name, as St. Chrysostom remarks, not only the high honor to which he had called her, but also the salvation which man had to expect through her. In the Syrian and Hebrew languages, Mary means "a lady; a light; light-giving; a star of the sea." And to whom can these appellations be better addressed than to her who was born to-day? "Christ is our Lord; Mary, our Lady, as she is always called. She has borne Christ, the King of heaven and earth: who can hesitate to call her Queen of heaven and earth, especially as she is raised in heaven above all the Saints?" Thus speaks St. John Damascen. The whole Church addresses her in the following language: "Thou glorious and blessed Virgin! Our Lady, our Intercessor, our Mediator!" She is our Lady; she is also a light, or "the enlightened," and more so than all the Saints, because she possessed a much clearer perception of God and of divine mysteries than all the other Saints: for, she was more closely united with the Light that illumines all mankind. She is a light, because, according to the teachings of St. Anselm and many others, she revealed to the Apostles and Evangelists, many things which she knew of the life and actions of our Saviour, and thus instructed them, and gave them light in matters of faith. She is a light, because she obtained, for so many who sought it by her intercession, wisdom and knowledge in spiritual matters, and does the same still to this hour. She is a star of the sea, because she guides us, by her intercession and her virtuous example, safely through the dangers of this world into the haven of eternal bliss. Hence, St. Bernard says to all: "When the waves of temptation rise, when you are wrecked upon the rock of sorrow, gaze upwards to the star, call upon Mary! When the waves of pride, of ambition, of jealousy, cast you hither and thither; when anger, or avarice, or cupidity toss the bark of your mind; look up to the star, call upon Mary! Are you disheartened by the greatness and wickedness of your sins; are you frightened by your conscience; are you overcome by the fear of the Judgment and begin to doubt your own salvation:—think of Mary! In danger, in anxiety, in doubt, think of Mary, call upon her; let her not depart from your lips nor from your heart. If you follow her, you cannot go astray; if you call on her, you need not despair. If you think of her, you cannot err. If she guards you, you cannot fall; if she protects you, you are secure; if she accompanies you, you will hasten without any danger to the shore of eternal salvation: and you will, indeed, experience that the name of the Virgin is "Mary—Star of the Sea."

This mysterious name, given to the new-born child, is still honored by all true Christians. It is certain that after the most holy name of Jesus, no name is more venerated than Mary's. And as the two holy persons, Jesus and Mary, were as closely united on earth, as son and mother could be united, so do we unite the two holy names of Jesus and Mary. Both names give consolation in life and in death to those who call upon them; both are terrible to the spirits of hell. Hence, we find, in the lives of the Saints, that they devoutly called upon these names in their suffering, and that they departed this life with these names on their dying lips.

It is beyond doubt that Joachim and Anna were overjoyed at the birth of their child; for if, at the birth of St. John Baptist, many rejoiced, according to the Angel's words, though this Saint was only a forerunner of Christ, how much greater must have been the joy at Mary's birth, of those who knew by Divine revelation that the new-born child was to be the mother of the Redeemer! The joy of the parents was united with prayers to God and other pious exercises. But what did Mary herself do? Many theologians maintain, and not without cause, that the Blessed Virgin was, even before her birth, endowed with perfect reason; for, they say, if God gave the use of reason, at least for a time, to St. John, Christ's forerunner, while he was still in his mother's womb, as we may infer from the fact that he leaped for joy in the presence of the divine mother, why should He not have vouchsafed the same grace, or even a still greater one, to the Blessed Virgin, His future mother? If Eve, the mother of the fallen race, entered the world with the full use of reason, Mary, the Eve of the New Covenant, the Mother of the living God, has surely not been denied this prerogative. As soon as Mary had the use of her reason, she turned to God as her aim and end, and began to love Him and to consecrate herself entirely to His service. The same she did, without doubt, on entering the world. Hence it is so much the more just and right that the Holy Church admonishes us to celebrate this day's festival with joy: "Let us rejoice at the birth of Mary."

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. Mary, the Divine Mother, was born to-day, and, at the moment of her birth, turning her thoughts to God, she adores Him with deepest reverence; gives thanks to him for all graces received, and consecrates herself entirely to His service.</p>	<p>What did you do after you had reached the age of discretion? Oh! how late you turned your thoughts to the Almighty; how late you commenced to serve Him, if you have ever commenced! Begin at least to-day, what you ought to have be-</p>
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gun as soon as you came to the use of reason. Turn your thoughts towards your Creator; worship Him most humbly; give Him thanks for the countless benefits you have received at His hands during your life; consecrate yourself to His service, and begin to manifest that you will henceforth serve the Lord more zealously. Repent, with your whole heart, for not having done it earlier. For in truth, as you have received your life from God to serve Him alone, you ought to have employed it entirely in His service. "No one can doubt," says St. Salvian, "that we ought to employ to God's honor that which He has given us." Your conscience, however, tells you that this has not been done. The smallest part of the life God gave you has been devoted to His service; a part of it has perhaps been employed in offending Him. Nothing, therefore is left you, except earnestly to repent of the past, and to make the resolution to correct your conduct in future. Begin both of these while it is yet to-day.

II. Great lords and ladies are generally more generous in bestowing gifts at the celebration of their birth-day. Do not doubt that the Divine Mother, though at all times ready to obtain graces for us from God, will be especially inclined to obtain for us to-day, on her glorious

birth-day, whatever we may ask of God, if it is not against our salvation. Address yourself, then, with great confidence, to her, and beg her to obtain from the Almighty the pardon of your sins, and grace to employ the time still left to you, for the service of God and your own salvation. In remembrance of the significations of her name, address her as the Queen of Heaven and Earth, as light, as light-giving, as the star of the sea, as the star of your salvation. Pray to her, that she may safely guide you over this dangerous ocean of life, into the port of eternal rest. Pray to her, that she may give you light to recognize what you have to do, and what you have to avoid, in order to gain heaven. Pray to her, that she may take you into her Son's service, and retain you in it continually. **Make use, with great devotion, of the words of the holy church:** "We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God, despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us from all dangers, O ever glorious and Blessed Virgin! Our Lady, Our Mediator, Our Intercessor! Reconcile us to thy Son. Commend us to thy Son. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of thy Son, Jesus Christ. Amen."

NINTH DAY OF SEPTEMBER.

ST. GORGONIUS, ST. DOROTHEUS AND ST. ADRIAN, MARTYRS.

The Roman Martyrology commemorates St. Gorgonius and St. Dorotheus, to-day. St. Adrian was mentioned yesterday.

St. Gorgonius, though chamberlain of the heathen Emperor, Dioclesian, was secretly a Christian, and with the assistance of Dorotheus, who occupied a similar position, he gradually converted all the chamberlains of the court to the Christian religion.

One day, when both had witnessed the cruel torturing of a Christian, condemned by the emperor, their hearts were filled with the desire to suffer martyrdom for their faith, and addressing Dioclesian they said: "Why do you torture only him? We profess the same religion, and we wish to suffer for Christ's sake as he suffers." The Emperor was highly incensed at these words, and both were immediately barbarously scourged, after which, salt and vinegar were poured upon their wounds. When this had been done, they were chained upon a gridiron, placed over a fire, and having been thus roasted for some time, they were at length hung. Thus died these two holy martyrs, animated to endurance by witnessing the martyrdom of others.

St. Adrian was converted in a similar manner. He was about twenty-eight years old, descended from the first Roman nobility, and was one of the most distinguished of the imperial courtiers under Maximian Galerius. He was often a witness of the sufferings of the Christians when they were tortured in the presence of the emperor. Considering the constancy and joy with which they suffered the most cruel pains, he came to the conclusion that such strength must be more than human, and that there must be a God who imparted it, and further, that this God must be the only true one. Having arrived thus far, he would no longer hide the change that had taken place in him, and he confessed publicly that he was a Christian, and desired to live and die as such. No sooner had the Emperor Maximian been acquainted with this, than he commanded him to be cast into a dungeon, where twenty-three others were already confined. Natalia, the wife of Adrian, who, for a long time, had been a Christian, was greatly rejoiced when she heard of his conversion. She hastened to the dungeon, threw herself upon his neck, kissed the chains that fettered him, and praised him that at last he had recognized the truth of Christianity. Having encouraged him to remain firm in the approaching combat, she had to leave him as she was not permitted to stay any longer. A few days later, Adrian was informed that the emperor had sentenced him to die. Not in the least terrified at this message, he bribed the jailer to allow him to go to his wife and communicate to her this joyful news, promising to return in a few hours. When on his way, he met an acquaintance, who hastened before him to prepare Natalia for the coming of her husband. She was terrified when she heard of his coming, thinking that he must have become faithless to Christ. Running hastily to the door of the house, she closed it against him, saying that she neither could nor would recognize as her spouse, one who had become an apostate. Adrian called to her to listen, as he had not renounced the true faith, but had

only returned to bring her the joyful news that he had been sentenced to die. Quickly opening the door to him, Natalia, falling at his feet, begged his pardon, and after some conversation, she returned with him to the prison, where she renewed her exhortations that he would remain firm, and she prayed to God to give him strength in his approaching martyrdom. The day on which Adrian was brought before the Emperor, Natalia, going to him, said: "The time has now arrived, my beloved spouse, to manifest your noble resolutions. Think of the Almighty. Your sufferings will end, but the reward which you will receive in heaven has no end. If you have been brave in combating for your Emperor, who could give you only an earthly recompense, how much braver ought you to be when fighting for Christ, who will give you an eternal crown." Adrian, filled with Christian heroism, went to the Emperor, and as he fearlessly confessed Christ, the tyrant ordered him first to be scourged with rods, then beaten with clubs, and after this, to be torn with small iron hooks. Having suffered all this, he was led back to the dungeon, where Natalia and some other matrons waited for him. Embracing him most tenderly, she congratulated him on having so courageously withstood the first assault. She wiped the blood that flowed from his wounds, and endeavored in every possible way to give him some comfort. The tyrant, hearing of it, forbade them henceforth to admit women into the prison. Natalia, going home, cut off her hair, put on male attire, and thus returned unknown to Adrian. Soon after came the imperial command to cut off the hands and feet of all the imprisoned Christians and to burn their bodies. The invincible confessors of Christ praised God and prepared themselves for the cruel martyrdom. Natalia requested the executioners to begin with her husband, that the sight of the sufferings of the others might not give him fear. Encouraging him to bear his pain with fortitude, she accompanied him to the place of execution, and there manifested a heroism such as perhaps the world had never before beheld. She herself laid the feet of her husband upon the block, and constantly animating him, she held them there until the executioner had cut them off. She then did the same with his hands. Adrian remained fearless to his last breath. Natalia reverentially kissed his feet and hands, but was not allowed to take them home with her. The fate of Adrian was shared by all those who had been imprisoned with him, and when they had all gloriously ended their combat, the executioners threw their bodies and limbs upon a pile of wood to burn them. But a terrible storm arose, every one fled, and the rain extinguished the fire, which gave the faithful an opportunity to carry the bodies and limbs,

as yet untouched by the flames, into the nearest Christian dwelling. They also bought for a large sum, the garments which the martyrs had worn and which the executioners had divided among themselves. Placing these and the sacred relics in a vessel, they brought them from Nicomedia, where these holy martyrs had suffered, to Constantinople. One arm of her husband was kept as a priceless treasure by Natalia, that incomparable Christian heroine. Some days later, Adrian appeared to her, and directed her to leave for Constantinople in order to escape the danger of becoming the wife of a heathen, as the Emperor desired. Natalia obeyed, went to Constantinople, and served God with great fervor, until Adrian again appeared to her in her sleep and said: "Come, thou zealous servant of Christ and of the Martyrs! take possession of the glory prepared for thee in Heaven!" She awoke, related her dream, again closed her eyes, as though she would sleep, and calmly and peacefully expired.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

1. Gorgonius and Dorotheus converted all the chamberlains of the Emperor to the true faith, and evinced a most admirable zeal for the salvation of souls. There may be also in our time, men in a subordinate condition, who have done the same in regard to their companions. By kind persuasions, by explaining the Catholic faith, by inviting them to listen to sermons, they have made them acquainted with the truth, and thus converted them. Those who have occasion for such pious work ought not to neglect it, as by it they prove their love to God and their neighbor, to the great benefit of their own souls. There are many other ways in which domestics, soldiers, and others, may give evidence of this love. You, perhaps, work with another servant, or have a friend or acquaintance, who is negligent or slothful in his prayers, in going to church, in partaking of the Holy Sacraments, in reading devout books, or in the exercise of other good works. You know another who is addicted to gambling, cursing, blasphemy, slander, or drinking.

He utters the most lascivious speeches and laughs at them; he sings the most abominable songs; reads heretical, superstitious, unchaste, or otherwise bad books. He is faithless to those whom he serves, and purloins all he can lay hold of; he frequents bad or dangerous company, and goes to places of sinful amusement. Oh! how you can prove your zeal; how strong a love can you show to God and to your neighbor, if you animate those who are tepid to greater fervor in prayer, to visiting the church, to partaking of the Holy Sacraments, to reading devout books, and other exercises of virtue, and in preventing those who are wicked from doing works of iniquity! In many cases, this is your duty, and by omitting it, you become guilty of the sins of others. It is not always possible for you to make an impression with your words; but you can do much by your example, and you can pray for those whom you can neither persuade nor dissuade. These means, given you by the Almighty, you must not neglect

to make use of, if you truly love God and your neighbor. You must do all you can, and where you are in doubt how to act, ask the advice of your confessor. I only tell you this: you cannot do anything more pleasing to God or more beneficial to mankind, than to admonish the sinner to do good, and to prevent him from doing evil.

You must also know that you cannot do anything more displeasing to God, or more hurtful to yourself and your neighbor, than by restraining the latter from doing good or by tempting him to sin, or by giving him an opportunity of doing evil. Hence, guard yourself from restraining your fellow servants, your friends, or others, from praying, going to church to hear sermons, or similar pious works, by laughing at them, or by deriding their piety. Still more guard yourself from tempting them to faithlessness, disobedience, unchastity, or any other sin. Become not a partaker in the iniquities that your fellow servants commit. Do not assist them, even should they persecute you, or drive you from your place on account of it. It is much better to be driven from the house innocently, by the wickedness of such people, than deservedly to be precipitated into hell by the Almighty. If you were to poison, or otherwise kill, the body of your fellow-servant, you would render yourself guilty of death before the temporal authorities and would die by the hand of the executioner. What do you suppose you deserve from God, if you deprive your neighbor of the spiritual life of his soul, yes, even of eternal life, which you do by tempting him to sin or by giving him opportunities to do wrong,

or by otherwise assisting him in doing evil? Do not doubt that you deserve the unavoidable punishment of Divine Justice, hell, eternal perdition. If you fear this, follow my advice.

II. "Think of God!" with these words Natalia animated her husband to endure bravely the most barbarous martyrdom. By saying this, she meant: "God is present; He sees your suffering, He will assist, strengthen, and richly recompense you. Think of this, and you will not regard your pains, you will remain constant."

Take this to-day as an important lesson, not only to cheer you in adversity, but also to prevent you from sin and to animate you to remain steadfast in the path of rectitude. "Think of God!" He is always with you. He sees how and what you suffer. He will assist you with His grace and richly recompense you. Hope in Him, do not despair. He knows the good you do. He leaves nothing unrewarded. Therefore be zealous in doing good. God is with you, when you are in temptation to sin. He sees, hears, and knows everything. Nothing that you do escapes Him. Hence, dare not commit sin in His presence, before His very eyes. He can precipitate you into everlasting fire, the very moment you offend Him. Do not dare to utter an offensive word, or to give place to an evil thought; for He will one day call you to account for it. Think of God! In times long since past, this was the lesson the venerable Tobias gave to his son: "All the days of thy life, have God in thy mind; and take heed that thou never consent to sin." (Tobias, iv.)

TENTH DAY OF SEPTEMBER.

ST. NICHOLAS OF TOLentino, CONFESSOR; ST. PULCHERIA,
EMPRESS.

St. Nicholas was born at St. Angelo in the March of Ancona, but is called Nicholas of Tolentino, from having resided during the last thirty years of his life at the latter place. His parents, Campanus and Amata, were long without issue, and desiring to be blessed with a child, they made a pilgrimage to Bari, to the shrine of the holy bishop St. Nicholas. Having most fervently performed their devotions, they were favored with an apparition of the Saint, who told them that they would have a son, whom they should call Nicholas, and who would become a man of eminent virtue. The truth of this prediction was soon made known. Amata gave birth to a son, who, in accordance with the command of the Saint, was named Nicholas. It was a striking fact, that from his early childhood, Nicholas possessed, in an eminent degree, the spirit of prayer, and when, as is the habit of children, he shed tears, nothing could pacify him more easily than to be told that they would carry him to church. When there he was always quiet, and as he became older, he showed a reverence that was truly angelical. He never spoke a word while in the house of God; never looked curiously about. In his whole conduct there was never seen any childishness or frivolity.

When he was old enough to begin his studies, he displayed remarkable eagerness for gaining knowledge, and made great progress: in consequence of which, he was, when yet quite young, admitted among the Canons of the church of St. Salvator. But one day, hearing a sermon on the words of the Apostle: "Do not love the world, or what is in the world," delivered by an Augustinian hermit, he perceived an inner desire to leave all that is temporal, and serve God more perfectly in a religious state. Hence he went, immediately after the sermon, to the superior of the above-named Order, and requested to be received as a novice. His request was granted; and fulfilling the prophecy of St. Nicholas, he gave, already in the year of his probation, manifestations of truly eminent virtues, which caused him to be allowed to make his profession earlier than was usual. His constant mortification excited the admiration of all with whom he came in contact. He had heard, when only seven years of age,

that his holy patron, St. Nicholas, had, when an infant, abstained every Wednesday and Friday, from his mother's breast, and had begun immediately to pass the same two days without any food. To these two fast-days, he, in the course of time, added two more. During thirty years, he never touched either flesh or fish; he even abstained from eggs, milk, and fruit, contenting himself with bread, vegetables and water. Even when seriously sick, he deviated not from this austerity. Once when the physicians prescribed meat for him, and the General of the Order commanded him to follow their advice, he obeyed, but having taken a little, he begged to be excused from eating more, saying that he would regain strength without it, which did not fail to happen. Besides these continual fasts, the holy man chastised his innocent body in various ways. He constantly wore a hair-shirt, and scourged himself every night with an iron chain. He took a short rest at night on the bare floor, and never allowed his body the slightest recreation. One day, when some one told him not to be too severe upon himself, he said: "I have not entered the religious state to indulge in my own comfort." The Evil One, endeavored vainly to disturb the pious zeal of the servant of God, by terrible visions and cruel ill-treatment; but Nicholas adhered faithfully to the path he had selected. His solicitude for the salvation of souls was indefatigable, and he reformed a great many by his sermons and private discourses. To visit the sick and prisoners and to comfort and assist them, was his greatest pleasure. Not less deep was his compassion for the souls in purgatory, and as he offered daily his prayers, his penances and holy Mass for them, he released a great many from their suffering. To Mary, the divine Mother, he was most fervently devoted from his early childhood, and therefore, he received many and great favors from her. Once, when suffering from a severe fever, he thought that his last hour had arrived, and he was overcome with fear while meditating on the judgments of the Almighty. He appealed to his beloved mother, the Blessed Virgin, who deigned to appear to him, telling him to put aside all fear and be hopeful. She, at the same time, blessed a crust of bread that was lying beside him, and told him to eat of it, which he had no sooner done, than the fever left him. This is the origin of the so-called Tolentine bread, which is blessed on the feast of this Saint, and is often very beneficial to the sick. He himself wrought many miracles in favor of the sick and poor, as may be seen in his more circumstantial biography.

We will only add a few lines about his happy death, the hour of which God had revealed to him, but which was preceded by

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a painful sickness that lasted six months. During this time, he derived an indescribable consolation from heavenly music which he heard during the night or towards morning. Several times this was heard also by those who were with him. He received the Holy Sacraments with wonderful devotion, shedding many tears. The crucifix, which enclosed a particle of the wood of the holy Cross, he kissed most fervently, praying to the Almighty to assist him in his last combat, and to guard him from all danger by the power of the holy Cross. Besides this, his heart was filled with the desire to behold God in heaven, whom he had loved above everything on earth. Hence he called aloud several times: "Oh! that I might be dissolved and be with Christ!" Shortly before he expired, a holy joy was seen on his countenance, and when asked the cause of it, he replied: "Our Lord, Jesus Christ, leaning upon His beloved mother and St. Augustine, calls me to Him with these words: "Come, thou pious and faithful servant! enter into the joys of thy Lord!" Having said this, he fixed his eyes upon the crucifix, saying: "Lord, into thy hands I commend my spirit," and expired. He is represented with a lily in his hand and a star on his breast. The lily represents the angelic purity and innocence which he kept inviolate; the star, the holy life of the great servant of the Almighty. St. Nicholas was, during his life, a bright star in the church of God, on account of his many and great virtues. His tomb shines yet, in our days, with a divine light, on account of the many and great miracles with which God there honors His faithful servant.



We also find this day, in the Roman book of Martyrs, a record of the life of the holy empress, St. Pulcheria. This Saint was a daughter of the emperor Arcadius, who, at his death, left four daughters and one son. The latter succeeding him upon the throne; reigned most gloriously under the name of Theodosius the younger. Pulcheria, though hardly two years older than her brother, supplied to him the place of a counsellor, without whose advice he did not undertake anything. God had gifted her with such wisdom, that she administered the most important affairs of the state, to the universal satisfaction and great benefit of the people. She instructed her brother, the emperor, most carefully, how to lead a holy life, not only for himself, but also as an example to his subjects, whose happiness she taught him to consider his greatest study. She had a peculiar way of correcting his faults, of which the following may serve

as an example: The emperor had the most implicit trust in some of his counsellors, and used to sign, without reading them, all the orders and letters they placed before him. Pulcheria, desiring to break him of so dangerous a habit, prepared an order, by force of which, his imperial spouse, Eudoxia, was to be delivered to Pulcheria as a prisoner. This order was laid before the emperor, among many others, and he signed it with the rest. Pulcheria took it, invited the empress into her apartments, and presenting the imperial order to her, said that she was and should remain her prisoner, until the emperor would countermand his order. Somewhat later, Theodosius sent for the empress, but Pulcheria returned for answer that Eudoxia was her prisoner, and that, as such, she would not release her. The emperor, surprised, hastened to his sister for an explanation of her answer. Placing before him the order he had signed, she said: "Behold, my brother and emperor, what may happen, when we are too hasty in our affairs, and sign what we have not read and examined." The emperor, kindly receiving the admonition, promised in future, to be more guarded.

For several years, all went well, and God visibly blessed what the emperor, advised by his sister, had done. At length, however, Chrysaphius, a wicked counsellor, succeeded in prejudicing the emperor against Pulcheria to such an extent, that he desired to be free from her presence, and to govern his people without her guidance. When Pulcheria became aware of this, she withdrew from the affairs of the government, and leaving the court, she went to a country-seat, not far from Constantinople, where she served God most fervently in peaceful solitude. She had long since taken the vow of perpetual chastity, and had persuaded her three sisters, Flaccilla, Arcadia and Marina, to do the same. Hence it became no difficult task for her to leave the pleasures and honors of the court, and occupy herself only with Him whom she had chosen as her spouse. The imperial court, however, soon wore a different aspect. Omitting many other disgraceful acts which were performed there, we will mention only a new heresy, which was allowed to spring up and thrive at Constantinople. Its author was a certain Eutyches. Chrysaphius, won by him, imparted the poisonous doctrines to the emperor and empress, who, favoring the heresiarch, soon began to persecute the faithful Catholics. Pulcheria, when informed of it, was deeply distressed that her brother had allowed himself to be so unhappily seduced, as to become, from a zealous protector of the true church, its persecutor. She prayed ceaselessly to the Almighty to enlighten and convert her brother, and requested the prayers of other pious servants of the Lord, to the same effect.

God granted her request, and bestowed upon Theodosius the grace to recognize and correct his error. As, at the same time, it became clear to him that he never would have become guilty of so grave a fault, if his pious sister had been near him with her counsel, he besought her to return to court. Although Pulcheria was happy and contented, and had no desire to return to the tumult of the world, the wish to lead her brother in the right path, and to guard him from again wandering from it, determined her to consent. She returned, therefore, to the court and city, and after having entirely restored her brother to the true faith, she endeavored, to the utmost of her power, to exterminate the new heresy, employing the same means which she had used when Nestorius began to disseminate his heretical errors. The bishops at the Council of Chalcedon hence called her a protector of the faith, an exterminator of heresy, and another St. Helena. The holy Pope, Leo I., thanked her, and congratulated her on account of the twofold victory she had won over those two heretics.

On the death of Theodosius, Pulcheria remained mistress of the empire. To assist her in this difficult position, she chose Marcian, who had been an officer of high rank under the late emperor, and was a man of distinguished merit and great sanctity of life. To him she gave her hand in marriage, but with the condition that both should live in continency, as she had consecrated her virginity to the Almighty. Marcian promised to respect her vow, and faithfully kept his word. The benefit which the holy church and the state derived from this union, cannot be described in the limited space allowed to us. The sole desire of the people, was, that Pulcheria and Marcian might be spared to reign over them for many years. But it pleased the king of all kings to call his faithful handmaid, Pulcheria, to her heavenly home, A. D., 453, before she had completed her fifty-fifth year. As she had never set her heart on temporal things, it was not hard for her to leave the world; indeed, when she felt that death was approaching, her desire to be united with Christ, whom she had served in chastity and faithful love, became more and more intense. Having devoutly received the Holy Sacraments, she ended her holy life calmly and peacefully.

The poor, to whom this incomparable empress had always been a most loving mother, became, by her will, her heirs. She had built, and richly endowed many churches and hospitals. Although in the midst of constant gaieties, she exercised herself in various penances, read daily in a devout book, and frequently rose at midnight to honor the Almighty by chanting the Psalms. She paid due reverence to the Saints and their relics, and was

deeply devoted to the Queen of Heaven. She defended the honor of the Blessed Virgin, especially against the heresiarch, Nestorius, who blasphemously pretended that although Mary was the mother of Christ, she was not therefore the mother of God. The council of Ephesus condemned this blasphemy, and St. Pulcheria, on this account, built a magnificent church, in honor of the Blessed Virgin. May the Almighty give to his church many such protectors, and guard and keep those who endeavor to follow the example of this Saint in her zeal, her generosity and magnanimity.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Meditation on the words: "Do not love the world, or what is in the world," and the sermon on the vanities of the world, drew Nicholas from all temporal things and led him to the path of holiness. If you also considered the vanity of temporal honors, riches and pleasures, you would not seek them so eagerly, nor be so foolishly devoted to them. Reflect within yourself what all that seems great in the world, really is and how long it lasts. "Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity," said he who had experienced it, Solomon the wise, after he had partaken of all the joys and good things of this world. He found in them only vanity and vexation of spirit, and saw that nothing is stable on this earth. All pleasures, honors and riches vanish, and often so quickly, that they are already gone when we think we are just beginning to enjoy them. And what do they leave? What do they bestow upon man? How much happier than before is he after partaking of them? Truly, not in the least. What they leave behind, what they bestow upon man, is nothing but anxiety of conscience, sadness of heart, and a just fear of divine punishment. "Mourning taketh hold of the end of joy," says the Holy Ghost. And what becomes of the lovers of the world and worldly vanities? St.

Bernard writes: "Tell me, where are the lovers of the world, who not long ago, were among us? What remains of them but dust, ashes and worms? Consider what they are now and what they were. They were men like you; they eat, drank and enjoyed themselves, and were precipitated, in one moment, into the depths of hell!" Is it possible that you believe this, and yet can love the world, and be a slave to the desires of the flesh? If you desire joys and possessions, strive to gain those which are everlasting.

II. The holy Empress, St. Pulcheria, evinced an intense longing to be united to her heavenly spouse, when she felt that death was approaching. St. Nicholas also made use of the words of St. Paul, expressing a desire to be with Christ. We are created for heaven and for God; we are here in exile; heaven is our home. We are in the world like pilgrims on the road. The end of this road is heaven, which we shall reach by walking straight onward. Why then do we not long more after heaven? Why do we not sigh more to see the face of the Almighty? We surely do great wrong by thinking so seldom of heaven, and by manifesting no desire to see God. This is a sign, either that we do not believe the teachings of our faith in regard to

heaven and God, or that we do not sufficiently esteem so great a blessing. Both are wrong. Hence, endeavor, in future, frequently to awaken a desire for heaven, a longing to see God, the Supreme Good. Say with attention the following words of the Lord's prayer: "Thy kingdom come." Say with the holy King David: "When shall I come and appear before the face of the

Lord?" (Psalm xli.) or, with St. Nicholas, after the example of St. Paul: "I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ." (Philipp. i.) "How negligent, thoughtless and slothful are we in not endeavoring to sigh more frequently for heaven, for the blessed company of the Saints, and the contemplation of the Supreme Goodness!" says St. Paulinus.

ELEVENTH DAY OF SEPTEMBER.

ST. SERAPHINA.

ST. SERAPHINA, like many other Saints was descended from an aristocratic family. She received in holy baptism, the name of Sueva. Her father was Guido, Count of Urbino, and her mother, Catharine Colonna, was a niece of Pope Martin V. Having lost her parents early, she was taken to Rome to be educated in the noble family of Colonna. Having finished her education, she was married to Alexander Sforza, Lord of Pesaro, a widower, who had, from his first marriage, two sons, Galeatius and Constantius, both of whom Sueva treated like her own children. In the course of time, Alexander, being called to Milan to assist with his military forces his brother Francis Sforza, left the administration of his dominions in the hands of Sueva, who governed with great wisdom from the year 1456 until the year 1462. Returning from the war, Alexander was highly satisfied with the manner in which his pious spouse had conducted the affairs of the state; and everything seemed to indicate that he would now live with her in the peace and happiness of holy matrimony. But unfortunately, the contrary took place. Alexander became attached to a lady of Pesaro, named Pacifica, and his passion filled his heart with dislike for his lawful wife, which gradually settled into a deep hatred, especially after she had represented to him the sinfulness of his conduct. At the same time, kindled by Satan, his sinful passion for Pacifica increased, and, at last, took such entire possession of him that he twice endeavored to poison Sueva. Not succeeding in these attempts, he went, one night, into her apartment, and seizing her by the throat, would have strangled her, had not her screams brought the servants into the

room. Sueva, desirous to hide her husband's crime explained her cries for help, by saying that she had thought a murderer had entered; but when the servants found their lord's hat, which he had let drop on hearing their steps, they knew well who the assassin had been. Not long after, Alexander dragged her by the hair of her head into the courtyard, and beat her until she sank fainting upon the ground. He then told her, if she valued her life, to leave his house immediately and retire into a convent. Sueva humbly submitted, and without a murmur, obeyed the order, and entered the Convent of the Poor Clares. Her departure was a cause of great grief to her two step-sons to whom she had been most devoted, and who looked upon her as a mother, as well as to all the domestics whose esteem and love she had won. Sueva was deeply wounded by the cruel treatment of her husband, who to excuse his conduct, declared her guilty of many crimes. When in the solitary stillness of the convent, kneeling before a crucifix, she uttered her complaints and sorrows to the Lord, it seemed to her that Christ from the cross cheered her most lovingly, saying that she should bear these calumnies with a patient heart out of love to Him, who had borne cruelties and insults, and a most ignominious death for her sake. Sueva, thus addressed, felt comforted and strengthened. She received, in religion, the name of Seraphina, which she deserved on account of her great and heroic love of Jesus. Alexander, her husband, was meanwhile carried away for several years by the whirlwind of sin, until the day of grace and mercy dawned also for him, through the prayers, as we may well suppose, of his holy spouse. Having become weary of Pacifica, he maltreated her most cruelly, and thus saved her; for, leaving him, she did penance, made her peace with God, and died, two years later, in the deepest contrition. Alexander also repented of his conduct, and having done penance, was changed from a wolf into a gentle lamb. He begged his innocent wife to forgive the wrong he had done her, and made rich gifts to the convent to which she had retired. Nine years later, he died the death of a penitent. Seraphina, solicitous to aid him not less in eternity than she had done while he was on earth, offered many prayers and good deeds to the Lord for the repose of Alexander's soul.

She exercised herself with still greater zeal in all virtues, and was particularly admired for her humility, and her great love for the sick and needy. She performed the lowest work in the convent, and chastised her body by severe penances. After she had spent thirteen years in religion, she was unanimously elected Superior to the great temporal and spiritual benefit of the convent. At length, after eighteen years of a most holy life, rich in merits

and virtues, she died calmly in the Lord, on the eighth day of September. The day, on which the Blessed Virgin, her Queen and Mother, first saw the light of the world opened to Seraphina the gates of heaven for all eternity.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

Behold here a life full of useful lessons for Christians in the married state.

I. There are numberless unhappy marriages in this world ; and it is indeed no slight misfortune to be bound to a person who, instead of being a help and comfort, embitters your life as well as his own. Yes, the sufferings which many a woman endures, in one week, from an infidel, drunken, brutal, vicious husband, often surpass the crosses which others have to bear during years. But unfortunately what is generally the conduct of such women ? They run to their friends, complaining and weeping, and feel still more unhappy because they have complained and wept.

Sorrowful woman ! the example of Seraphina shows you where you can find comfort and strength : in Christ you will find it ; in the Son of God crucified for you. Cast yourself at His feet ; to Him bring your complaints and your suffering ; hasten to His tabernacle, receive Him often and with fervor, and you will be comforted. Offer your prayers for the conversion of your husband, and perhaps God will hear you sooner than you think.

The same would I say to a mar-

ried man, if his wife makes life sad and cheerless.

II. If an unhappy marriage is often a hell upon earth, a seemingly happy one may really lead into hell itself. How many sad examples of this we see ! many a pious girl marries an unbelieving man : she is temporally prosperous ; but she gradually loses her faith and hence her soul. And in like manner, many a pious youth, who marries an infidel daughter of the world, begins to neglect his religion and soon forsakes it entirely. Such a marriage, although apparently peaceful, is truly a thousand times more to be pitied than one which is temporally unhappy.

III. Seraphina loved her step-children as if they were her own, and they looked up to her as if she were their own mother. Nothing is more common than dissension in a second marriage. Why ? Because step-children are treated unkindly, and are unjustly blamed and punished. This is wrong ; and those acting thus will have to give a strict account when they are called to appear before the judgment-seat of God. If they have neglected the Christian education of their step-children, they will perhaps have to suffer in hell a well-deserved punishment.

TWELFTH DAY OF SEPTEMBER.

ST. GUIDO, CONFESSOR.

St. Guido or Guy, surnamed the Poor Man, was born and educated in a small village in Belgium, of poor but very devout parents. As they were unable to send their son to school, or to let him learn a profession, they took the utmost care to bring him up piously, and impressed on him love to God, fear of the divine judgment and horror of sin. Guido, obedient to his parents, followed their instructions, and fearing and loving the Almighty, avoided the least sin, and shunned every temptation to evil. He was so much devoted to prayers that he often went secretly into the church, where his conduct was such that he was called the Angel of the village. He was content with his poverty, and never murmured against any privation which he suffered. He had a most compassionate heart for the poor, whom he even assisted with what he himself had begged. One day, he had to go to a village called Laken, about four miles from Brussels. There, before attending to his business, he went into a church, and prayed long and fervently before an image of the Blessed Virgin. The curate of the place, observing him and edified by his devotion, asked him whence he came, who he was, how he maintained himself, and other similar questions. The manner in which the boy answered convinced the curate that he possessed much more mind and piety than might have been supposed from his youthful appearance: he therefore asked him if he would remain and serve in the church. Greatly rejoiced, Guido said that such had been his desire for a long time. At that time he was fourteen years old, yet, when he was appointed assistant to the sexton, he was so untiringly industrious in his work, so reverential to the clergy, so modest and devout, that he made himself beloved by every one. The cleanliness of the church was his greatest care, as he regarded it as the dwelling of that Lord to whom he was so fervently devoted. The time left to him from his work he employed in prayers, and even spent several hours in the church before the altar every night. When he became fatigued at such times, he lay down upon the pavement of the church and closed his eyes for a little while. Often was he found praying with tearful eyes before an image of the Blessed Virgin, calling on her with a loud voice to obtain for him

pardon for his sins. He had always led a blameless life and wept more over the slightest fault of which he had become guilty than others over their vices and crimes. The remuneration he received was very small, yet the greater portion of it he gave to the poor.

A merchant of Brussels, observing Guido's great charity to the poor, persuaded him, to go with him to Brussels, where he would employ him in his business, which would enable him to gain more money and hence give more to the poor. Guido captivated by the promise, went secretly away with the merchant and engaged in commerce. One misfortune, however, after another assailed him, the last of which happened as follows. A vessel, richly freighted, on board of which he was, was in the utmost danger. Every one tried to save himself. Guido seized a spar, but it broke in his hands, leaving a splinter so deep in his arm that it could not be extracted. He, however, safely reached the shore. This accident opened his eyes to the fault he had committed in leaving the service of the church. Repenting of his error, he returned to Laken, begged the curate's pardon, and returned to his former occupation. As the splinter in his arm occasioned him great pain, and impeded his work, he sought and found help from the Divine Mother of Mercy; while he was praying before her image the splinter came out, and his arm was immediately healed. From that time he redoubled his zeal in the performance of his duties and in the practice of self-abnegation.

Some time afterwards he requested of the curate the permission to go to Rome, and thence to the Holy Land. Seven years he spent visiting the holy places, living during this period of time upon alms. When on his return he again came to Rome, he found Wondulf, dean of the church of Anderlecht, who, with some canons, intended visiting the Holy Land. He requested Guido, as being acquainted with the places they were setting out for, to accompany them. The Saint, although enfeebled in health, would not refuse an act of kindness, and for the second time he undertook the fatigues of the journey. They had scarcely visited the Holy Places, when the dean and his companions were seized with a most malignant fever from which none of them recovered. Guido nursed them with the most tender care, and having closed their eyes, he returned to Belgium and brought to Anderlecht the news of the death of the Dean and his companions. Soon after, Guido, enfeebled by his long journeys, became sick, and as God had revealed to him the hour of his death, he prepared himself for it most devoutly. Having received the holy sacraments, he was during the night occupied in prayer, when the room was

suddenly filled with a heavenly brightness, and at the same time a voice was heard, saying: "Come, thou good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of thy Lord." At the same moment the holy man breathed his last, in the year of our Lord, 1012. His holy body was buried with great honors, and the glory of which he began to partake in heaven, was revealed to the world by the miracles wrought through his intercession. Some years later, a beautiful church was built in his honor, and his holy relics were transferred to it with great solemnity.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Guido was called the angel of the village, on account of the reverence which he manifested in church. Can you be called an angel for the same reason? If you are one of those who look about, talk and laugh, to the disturbance and scandal of others, you surely cannot be called so; for, the angels manifest the greatest devotion in the church on account of the infinite Majesty of Him who dwells there. He who would, for such conduct, call you a devil instead of an angel, would not be far from the truth; as only those incited by the Evil One act in so irreverent a manner. "Some," says St. Augustine, "come into the Church by the instigation of Satan; for, they do not pray, but talk, laugh, jest, and commit other iniquities, and, therefore, will soon follow their leader into eternal torments." One might, however, almost think that such persons are worse than the devils; for these, according to the testimony of St. James, believe and tremble: but such people do not tremble before God, their Judge, but dare to be impudent and audacious. Take care; the day will come when He will be your Judge, whom you, while He is concealed under the form of bread, so wickedly offend. How will you feel then, when you have not shown him due honor in Church, but have only

caused Him displeasure? Surely you will tremble before Him more than the devils themselves.

II. St. Guido was satisfied with his poverty, neither complaining nor murmuring against God or men. The Almighty gives to some an abundance of earthly goods, while others suffer for the want of them. "The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich." (I. Kings, ii.) Those who are rich have no cause to boast of it, to be proud, to elevate themselves above others, nor to despise others; for, riches are gifts of God, alms of the Lord of heaven and earth. Those who are poor have no reason to murmur against God, nor to envy the rich; for, God has done no wrong to them by refusing them riches. He was not obliged to give it to them. The rich ought to guard themselves against placing their heart on their possessions, according to the admonition of the Psalmist: "If riches abound, set not your heart upon them," (Psalm lxi.) They ought not to love them too much; for, it is written: "There is not a more wicked thing than to love money; for, such a one setteth his own soul for sale." (Eccl. x.) The poor ought not to be too sad on account of his poverty, but console himself with the words of Tobias: "Fear not, my son; we lead indeed a poor life, but we shall have many

good things, if we fear God and depart from all sin, and do that which is good." (Tob. iv.) He ought to be sure that it is for his good that God has refused him riches, because they were not beneficial towards his salvation. If the poor Lazarus had possessed the wealth of the rich man, who knows if he would not have been condemned? The poor should therefore make a virtue of necessity, and bear the burden of poverty patiently, as St. Guido did, after the example of Christ. The same example should also animate him in times of despondency. He must not try to help himself in his poverty by unlawful means, nor by offending God, but must lead a Christian life, work diligently, and trust in God, who surely will not forsake him. But should he languish and die of want, let him think that it is better to perish in poverty, like Lazarus, and ascend with him into heaven, than to live for a time, like the rich man, in affluence, and afterwards to be buried in hell. The rich ought to take care not to misuse their wealth, but to employ it according to the will of the Almighty, who will demand a strict account of it. He ought to be compassionate and generous to the poor, that he may

not have the fate of the rich man of the Gospel. St. Basil says that God gives to some riches, and to others poverty, that the former may gain salvation by bestowing alms, the latter by exercising patience. If the rich act not in accordance with the intentions of the Almighty, they will experience the truth of the words of St. James, who writes: "Go now, ye rich men, weep and howl in your miseries which shall come upon you. . . . You have stored up to yourselves wrath against the last days." (James v.) Listen also to the terrible menace of Christ: "But woe to you that are rich, for you have your consolation." (Luke, vi.) Woe in life! Woe in death! Woe after death in eternity! "Where are the princes of the nations," says the Prophet Baruch, "and they that rule over the beasts that are upon the earth? that take their pastime with the birds of the air? that hoard up silver and gold, wherein men trust, and there is no end of getting? that work in silver and are solicitous and their works are unsearchable?" Answering this question, he says: "They are cut off and are gone down to hell, and others are risen up in their places." (Baruch, iii.)

THIRTEENTH DAY OF SEPTEMBER.

ST. MAURILIUS, BISHOP OF ANGERS.

The native place of St. Maurilius was Milan, and his teacher was St. Martin, who had founded a monastery near that city, wherein he lived. After this holy man had been banished from Milan by the Arians, and had become Bishop of Tours, Maurilius went to him to be instructed in virtue and wisdom. When he had made sufficient progress, St. Martin ordained him priest,

after which Maurilius repaired to Angers to preach the Gospel, as at that time, a great number of the inhabitants were pagans. While on this way thither, he saw the temple of an idol, standing near the river. Pitying the blindness of the people, he besought God to destroy this temple; when, behold, fire falls from heaven, the temple is overthrown, the idol burned to ashes! Maurilius, having had all the rubbish carried away, assisted by some pious Christians, built a church upon the same spot, together with a monastery in which he took up his abode with a number of devout men, whom he governed as Abbot. During this time he converted an almost countless number of pagans, as well in the city as out of it, by zealous preaching and the miracles he performed on the sick, the possessed and the blind.

Meanwhile the Bishop of Angers died, and St. Martin, who went thither to choose a successor, took Maurilius with him. The clergy and people were assembled, and the election was about to begin, when suddenly a white dove was seen which, after having fluttered through the church for some time, at length descended upon the shoulder of St. Maurilius. All looked upon this event as a sign that God had chosen this holy man as Bishop, and hence they unanimously declared that they desired no other. He was therefore consecrated bishop by St. Martin, to the inexpressible comfort of the people, although he himself shed many tears at being obliged to accept the dignity.

As Bishop, his virtues shone still more brightly; for he had more opportunities to practise them in the world than in the convent and his exalted station imparted to them an additional lustre. He fasted with great rigor, and on three days of the week he partook only of bread and salt. He never tasted wine, and during Lent, seldom left his residence; "for," said he, "Lent is a time of solitude, during which we ought to contemplate the passion and death of Christ." He was unwearied in instructing his flock and in converting the heathen.

One day, while he was standing before the Altar to perform the holy sacrifice, a woman requested him to administer to her sick son the holy sacrament of Confirmation. Maurilius, not thinking that the lad was in danger, continued Mass, but before he had finished it, the child was dead. The holy man was exceedingly grieved at this accident, and as if having committed great sin, he sentenced himself to a severe penance. He secretly left the city, and hastened over hill and dale, until having arrived at the sea, he went on board of a ship which was setting sail for England. During the voyage, the keys of the holy relics which he had taken with him, fell into the sea, and he solemnly declared that he would not return to his diocese, until he should

again possess them, which, as he believed, would never happen. At length he arrived in England, where, without making himself known, he took service with a nobleman as gardener. It was his intention to do penance for his sin by the hard labors of this occupation during winter and summer. The inhabitants of Angers were meanwhile greatly dismayed at the disappearance of their highly esteemed bishop, and sent several persons in search of him. Seven whole years had elapsed, when, by divine revelation they found him. Their good angel guided them in such a manner, that they found their holy bishop coming from his garden with a load of vegetables for his master. They immediately recognized him, and besought him, with tears in their eyes, to return to his see, and watch over the spiritual welfare of his flock. St. Maurilius, who thought that they had long since elected another bishop, was greatly disturbed on beholding them. He could not deny his identity, but endeavored to evade their wishes by making different pretexts, and finally declared that he could not return under any circumstances, as he had solemnly vowed that he would not see Angers again until the keys were found which had fallen out of his hand into the sea. "If this is the only obstacle to your return, we are able to remove it," said the delegates; "for on the voyage, we caught a fish, in whose stomach we found the keys." Showing them to him, they persuaded him to regard the finding of them as an unmistakable proof that God desired his return. Maurilius made no further resistance, but taking leave of the gentleman whom he had served, he returned to his see. It must also be stated that, shortly before the arrival of the delegates, while St. Maurilius was weeping bitterly over his sins, an angel had appeared to him and given him the assurance of their entire remission, which filled his heart with inexpressible joy. It would be difficult to describe the rejoicings of the inhabitants of the entire diocese on the return of their holy bishop. The Saint, however, first went to the place where the above-mentioned lad had been buried seven years before. Having said his prayers with the utmost confidence in the power of God, he awakened the child from death, as is testified by St. Gregory of Tours and others. Those present had never so clearly comprehended how pious and holy a man God had bestowed upon them in their bishop, as at the moment of that startling event. Maurilius gave the lad the name of Renatus, which means "born again," and instructed him so carefully in all that pertains to a Christian life, that he afterwards became the successor of his holy teacher. The remainder of his life the Saint passed in his habitual austerity, and in great zeal for the salvation of souls. When he had reached his ninetieth year, God revealed to him the hour

of his departure. Preparing himself with the greatest solicitude, he ordered his grave to be dug, and after a short illness, gave up his soul to his Creator. At his funeral, besides other miracles which took place, two persons who had been blind from birth received their sight, and a man who had been paralyzed thirty-one years, regained the use of his limbs, on kissing the coffin in which the relics of the Saint reposed. Well worth considering are the words which the holy man spoke shortly before his death to those around him: "Ponder well," said he, "that your souls are bought at a great price: the precious blood of Jesus Christ."

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Maurilius hired himself as gardener to a nobleman, in order to atone for his sin. Sin must not only be repented of and confessed, but also expiated, as I have already told you. This expiation can be made by performing our work in the spirit of penance; by bearing patiently the cares and labors of our respective stations, by enduring heat and cold, sickness, poverty, persecution or wrong, and by offering all this to the Almighty as an atonement for our sins. This means should be employed by all those sinners who are either unable or unwilling to follow the example of so many holy penitents in the use of corporal austerities. As we cannot avoid labors, sufferings and hardships, let us labor and suffer patiently, and thus offer to God some atonement for our iniquities. The Council of Trent declares it a special proof of God's love, that we are permitted to atone, through the merits of Jesus Christ, for our sins, by bearing patiently the temporal evils that Providence lays upon us. Recognize and duly esteem this love, and act in accordance with my instructions.

II. Consider the last words of St. Maurilius. "Ponder well," said he, "that your souls are bought at a great price: the precious blood of Jesus Christ." This is a truth

which ought to be impressed upon your heart. "For you are bought," says St. Paul, "with a great price." (I. Cor. vi.) St. Peter says: "Knowing that you were not redeemed by corruptible things, as gold or silver, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled. (I Peter, i.) Christ has bought our souls with His blood. Hence, how priceless must they be in the sight of God, and how great should be our care to secure their salvation! Our horror of sin ought indeed to be great, as, by our iniquities, we deprive Christ of the soul so dearly ransomed, and sell it to the spirit of hell, according to the words of Isaias: "Behold, you are sold for your iniquities." (Isaias, l.) What was the price you received? The pleasure of a moment, as is said by St. Augustine. How dreadful a wickedness! Christ Jesus ransomed the souls of men with His precious blood, of which one drop is of more value than all the treasures of the world; and man sells his soul again to his most bitter enemy for a momentary pleasure, a short temporal advantage! How great a responsibility, how great a punishment must follow such astonishing wickedness! If you are guilty of such enormity, repent of it with bitter tears, and take your

priceless soul forcibly from Satan by doing penance, and in future think more of the inestimable price with which it was bought by Christ; otherwise the blood of the Saviour will cry for vengeance against you on the Judgment-day. "Let us guard with great solicitude," writes Eusebius of Emesa, "what Christ bought with His precious blood. He who defiles his soul, ransomed

by the sufferings of Christ, is not guilty of less than the blood of the Saviour." St. Bernard says on the same subject: "If we neglect the soul, which Christ esteemed more precious than His own blood, we draw down upon ourselves not only eternal condemnation, but we shall also be most severely punished; as we, so to say, have trodden under our feet the blood of the Lamb."

FOURTEENTH DAY OF SEPTEMBER.

THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS, AND THE LIFE OF ST. MATERNUS, BISHOP.

This festival was instituted in commemoration of the day on which the holy Cross of Christ, was, with great solemnities, brought back to Jerusalem. Chosroes, king of Persia, had invaded Syria with a powerful army, and had conquered Jerusalem, the capital. He caused the massacre of eighty thousand men, and also took many prisoners away with him, among whom was the Patriarch Zachary. But more painful than all this to the Christians was, that he carried away the holy Cross of our Saviour, which, after great pains, had been discovered by the holy empress, St. Helena. The pagan king carried it with him to Persia, adorned it magnificently with pearls and precious stones, and placed it upon the top of his royal throne of pure gold. Thus was the holy Cross held in higher honor by the heathen king, than Martin Luther would have manifested; for, in one of his sermons, he says of it: "If a piece of the holy Cross were given to me and I had it in my hand, I would soon put it where the sun would never shine on it."

Heraclius, the pious emperor, was greatly distressed at this misfortune, and as he had not an army sufficiently large to meet so powerful an enemy, he made propositions for peace. Chosroes, inflated by many victories, refused at first to listen to the emperor's proposal, but at length consented, on condition that Heraclius should forsake the faith of Christ and worship the Sun, the god of the Persians. Indignant at so wicked a request, the emperor, seeing that it was a question of religion, concerning the honor of the Most High, broke off all negotiation

with his impious enemy. Taking refuge in prayer, he assembled all the Christian soldiers of his dominions and commanded all his subjects to appease the wrath of the Almighty, and ask for His assistance, by fasting, praying, giving alms and other good works. He himself gave them the example. After this, he went courageously, with his comparatively small army, to meet the haughty Chosroes, having given strict orders that his soldiers, besides abstaining from other vices, should avoid all plundering and blaspheming, that they might prove themselves worthy of the divine assistance. Taking a crucifix in his hand, he animated his soldiers by pointing towards it, saying they should consider for whose honor they were fighting, and that there was nothing more glorious than to meet death for the honor of God and His holy religion. Thus strengthened, the Christian army marched against the enemy. Three times were they attacked by three divisions of the Persian army, each one led by an experienced general; and three times they repulsed the enemy, so that Chosroes himself had at last to flee. His eldest son, Siroes, whom he had excluded from the succession to the throne, seized the opportunity, and not only assassinated his own father, but also his brother, Medarses, who had been chosen by Chosroes as his associate and successor. To secure the crown which he had thus forcibly seized, Siroes offered peace to Heraclius, restored to him the conquered provinces, and also sent back the holy Cross, the patriarch Zachary, and all the other prisoners of war. Heraclius, in great joy, hastened with the priceless wood to Jerusalem, to offer due thanks to the Almighty for the victory, and to restore the holy Cross, which the Persians had kept in their possession during fourteen years, to its former place. All the inhabitants of the city, the clergy and laity, came to meet the pious emperor. The latter had resolved to carry the Cross to Mount Calvary, to the church fitted up for its reception. A solemn procession was formed, in which the Patriarch, the courtiers and an immense multitude of people took part. The clergy preceded, and the emperor, arrayed in sumptuous robes of state, carried the holy Cross upon his shoulder. Having thus passed through the city, they came to the gate that leads to Calvary, when suddenly the emperor stood still and could not move from the spot. At this miracle, all became frightened, not knowing what to think of it. Only to St. Zachary did God reveal the truth. Turning to the emperor the patriarch said: "Christ was not arrayed in splendor when He bore His Cross through this gate. His brow was not adorned with a golden crown, but with one made of thorns. Perhaps, O emperor, your magnificent robe is the cause of your detention."

The pious Heraclius humbly gave ear to the words of the patriarch, divested himself of his imperial purple, and put on poor apparel, he took the crown from his head and the shoes from his feet. Having done this, the sacred treasure was again laid on his shoulder: when, behold! nothing detained him, and he carried it to the place of its destination. The holy patriarch then deposited the Cross in its former place, and duly venerated it with all who were present. God manifested how much He was pleased with the honor they had paid to the holy Cross of Christ, by many miracles wrought on the same day. A dead man was restored to life by being touched by the sacred wood; four paralytic persons obtained the use of their limbs; fifteen who were blind received sight; many sick recovered their health; and several possessed were freed from the devil by devoutly touching it.



The Roman martyrology also records on this day St. Maternus, who was a disciple of the holy Apostle, St. Peter. Directed by him, he set out, with two other zealous men, Eucharius and Valerius, for Trier, or Treves, at that period a famous city of Germany, to preach the gospel. On the way, he became sick and died. Eucharius and Valerius, greatly distressed, returned to Rome and informed St. Peter of what had taken place. The Saint consoled them, and gave them his staff with which he had already worked more miracles than Moses with his rod, telling them to place it upon the body of Maternus, and to command him, in the name of Jesus Christ, to rise and preach the gospel. The body had already lain in the grave forty days, but no sooner had the two Saints done as the holy Apostle had commanded, than Maternus arose to life in the presence of a multitude of people, and forthwith commenced to preach the gospel. This miracle induced the inhabitants of the surrounding country to believe the words of the preacher, risen from the dead, and to embrace the Christian faith. After remaining for some time, the three holy men continued their voyage to Triers.

This city was yet in the darkness of paganism; but the preaching of St. Maternus and his companions, and the many miracles that God wrought through them, soon convinced the people that these men were sent by heaven to lead them to the path of salvation. Hence, they willingly listened to their instructions and were baptized. After Christianity had been well grounded in the city, St. Maternus went to Cologne, and thence

to Tongres, where he announced the word of God with equal success, although at the beginning, he had much to suffer. The new Christians of all these places desired to have St. Maternus as bishop, especially after his two holy companions had departed this life. He consented to their wishes, which burthened him greatly with work. But his love for God and man aided him to bear it cheerfully. By word and example, he endeavored to lead them to a Christian life, and exhibited an indescribable solicitude for their welfare. Among the many miracles by which God increased the fame of His servant, was the following: The Saint, on Christmas day, offered the holy sacrifice of the Mass in the three principal cities of his diocese, in the presence of a crowd of people. Having said Mass in the first, he was carried by an angel, in one instant, to the second, and then to the third. The love and esteem of the people for their shepherd increased greatly when this miracle became known. Having labored for many years in the vineyard of the Lord, he, one day, went to the church, and after long prayers, he was overtaken by sleep, during which his two holy companions appeared to him, surrounded by a heavenly light, with crowns upon their heads. They carried a still more beautiful crown in their hands, and said to the Saint: "Behold the never-fading crown which in three days thou shalt receive." The holy bishop awoke, but was so weak that he could not return to his residence without assistance. On the following day, he called the clergy, and afterwards some of the people of his flock, and, having exhorted all to remain faithful to their church, he spent the rest of the time in reciting the Psalms. Being thus prepared for death like a Saint, he raised his hands upwards and went to heaven, where the crown of everlasting life was awaiting him. As his death had taken place not far from Cologne, the inhabitants of this city desired his holy body to bury it. But the people of Tongres and Treves had the same wish, and there was great contention between these three cities. At length, following the advice of a venerable old man, they placed the holy body in a skiff, without oars or boatman, and prayed to God to direct it to the place where He wished that the body should rest. The boat was pushed out into the middle of the Rhine, when, going against the stream, it landed at some distance from Cologne. It was hence inferred that the holy relics should be buried at Treves, which was accordingly done with great solemnity.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The Cross on which Christ had died was raised and greatly honored by all the faithful. I suppose that if you possessed a particle of the true Cross, you would greatly honor and cherish it. But why do you not love and honor that cross, those trials which God sends you? They are, in a spiritual sense, a particle of the Cross of Christ, which will be most beneficial to you, if you bear it patiently. Christ, the Lord, called His crucifixion an exaltation, saying: "The Son of Man must be exalted;" because by it He was exalted in heaven and on earth, as He bore His sufferings and His death out of love for His heavenly Father and for the salvation of men. You also will be exalted in heaven, if, in carrying your cross, you follow the example of Christ. Many carry their crosses, like the thief on the left of Christ, with murmuring and impatience, others, like the one on His right, with patience and resignation, knowing that they deserve them. Jesus carried His Cross not only with patience, but, according to the words of the Apostle, with joy, although He was innocent. With whom do you carry yours? With whom will you carry it in future? If you carry it with the first, you will not be exalted,

but precipitated into the depth of hell.

II. St. Maternus died twice; and some historians say that he was the youth whom Christ raised from the dead at Nain. Had this been so, then he would have died three times. You surely do not flatter yourself that you will die twice or three times, but only once, as it is appointed to all men according to the words of the Apostle. You know that on this once dying, your whole eternity depends. How is it then possible that you are so little solicitous that this once dying should be happy? Why are you not constantly prepared, and doing everything that you know is necessary or of advantage for a happy death? The crown awaiting St. Maternus in heaven was shown to him before his death. He had prepared himself for a holy death, by a holy life; and this gained for him the heavenly crown. If you wish to obtain the crown of everlasting life, prepare yourself for a happy death, by a pious and truly Christian life. If you live thus, you will die happily whenever death comes. "Death preceded by a pious life, cannot be considered an evil or a misfortune; and he who has lived piously, cannot die unhappily," says St. Augustine.

FIFTEENTH DAY OF SEPTEMBER.

ST. CATHERINE OF GENOA.

St. Catherine was born of noble parents at Genoa, in 1447, and derived her surname from her native place. Her father was a descendant of the house of Fieschi. She was hardly eight years of age, when she already gave distinct signs of her future holiness. It is related of her, that even at that age she was filled

with intense devotion, and with a desire to suffer for the love of Christ. Hence she would not use a soft bed, but rested on straw, with a block of wood for a pillow; she also sought other means to give pain to her body. At thirteen, she desired most ardently to enter a convent, and to remain there her entire life; but on account of her tender age, she was not admitted. She then continued her pious life until she was sixteen years old, when her father gave her in marriage to Julian Adorno, a youth of a noble and rich family, but unhappily not in the least suited to Catherine. He treated her, from the first day of their marriage, with so little consideration, that every one pitied her. She left nothing untried to soften his disposition, but all was useless. Julian was a slave to gaming, eating and drinking, and seeking only the comforts and pleasures of life; he hated and persecuted the pious Catherine, who falling a prey to deep melancholy, shunned all society, and lived secluded in her room. At the end of five years, her relatives advised her, in order to divert her mind somewhat, to visit her friends, and give a part of the time, now employed in prayer, to innocent amusements. She followed this advice, but was very careful, so as not to offend God by doing wrong. Thus she passed five more years; but the more she gave herself up to the pleasures of the world, the more distasteful they became to her, and her melancholy increased to such a degree, that she became tired of life, and was harrassed with fears and scruples. Not knowing how to find relief, she went to her sister, who led a very edifying life in a convent, and who advised her to make known the whole state of her mind to the Confessor of the convent. Catherine, after a severe struggle with herself, went into the confessional. Hardly, however, had she knelt down, when the thought of God's mercy filled her soul with such love, whilst at the same time, the remembrance of her faults oppressed her with such bitter grief, that, sinking down, she could only cry. "O Lord, I will renounce the world and sin: I will sin no more, O Lord, I will sin no more." When she was somewhat more composed, she went home with the resolution to prepare herself for a general confession. Grief and love accompanied her and increased in such a manner, that, as she afterwards said, she thought she would die under their violence. Soon after, it appeared to her as if Christ were standing before her, carrying His heavy cross, and bleeding from His holy wounds, and said to her: "Behold all this blood has been shed for thee, and to redeem thee from thy sins." The feelings which this awakened in Catherine's heart it is impossible to describe: it was truly a miracle of divine mercy that the greatness of her pain and love did not immediately deprive her of life. "O love!"

she cried aloud, "O Love! No more sin ; no more sin !" After her mind had become more quiet, she prepared herself with great care for a general confession, which she made, amid a flood of tears, on the eve of the feast of the Annunciation. On the day of the festival, she partook of holy communion, and from that moment conceived an intense desire to receive this holy sacrament as often as possible.

She was not satisfied, however, with having repentantly confessed her faults, but to atone more effectually for them, she exercised herself continually in penances. In regard to her fasting, suffice it to say that she henceforth abstained from all those viands which were agreeable to her. For twenty-three years she touched no food during Lent, and, on the ember days, only took sometimes a little water and even with this she mixed vinegar or salt. The Blessed Sacrament, which she daily received, sustained her most miraculously. Although fourteen months after her general confession she received from God the assurance that her sins were expiated, she continued her penances as long as she lived. In works of Christian charity she evinced equal perseverance. At first she nursed the sick at their homes ; afterwards, she went into the large hospital, where she remained as long as her strength permitted. She had by nature a great aversion to wounds and ulcers, and the mere sight of them caused her nausea. To overcome this she frequently kissed the wounds and ulcers of the sick, and dressed them with the most tender care. In attending to the sick, she thought not only of their bodies but also of their immortal souls. Speaking gently to them, she encouraged them to bear their suffering patiently, exhorted them to repentance, and did all that Christian charity can do for the salvation of souls. For many who would have despaired in their sufferings, she obtained from God patience by her prayers. Among these stands foremost her own husband, who was laid low by a very painful malady which tormented him a long time. No remedy soothed his suffering ; day and night he had not a moment's peace, and hence often gave way to expressions of the greatest impatience. Catherine's utmost endeavors were bestowed in comforting him. She exhorted him most kindly to submit to divine Providence, to exercise Christian patience, and other virtues ; seeing, however, that all was fruitless, and fearing that he would go to eternal destruction, she addressed most fervent prayers for him to the Almighty. One day, while she was thus praying for his conversion, in a room adjoining his, she was heard to say : "O love ! I pray Thee for this soul. Give it to me, for Thou hast the power." After this, a complete change came over the sick man. He repented of his impatience, submitted to the

will of the Almighty, confessed his sins, and prepared himself earnestly for his last hour. Catherine received, from God Himself, the assurance of his salvation. Her prayers effected several similar conversions.

In her widowhood she redoubled her zeal in the practice of good works, and her life affords a perfect example of all the christian virtues, especially the most fervent devotion to God. The fire of love which burned in her heart frequently inflamed her whole body to such a degree, that she seemed to glow with heat, like iron in the fire. One day they laid her hands in cold water, which soon began to boil as if it had been long standing over the fire. It happened several times that the fire of divine love in her heart almost suffocated her, and addressing God, she cried: "O Love, come to help me!" God sent to this holy widow in the last years of her life, the most singular and painful maladies, which no remedies alleviated; she had desired to suffer for Christ's sake, and God complied with her request. Her patience was heroic, and her cheerfulness forsook her not during the greatest pain.

Her life and suffering ended on Septemoer 15th, 1510, in the s.xty-third year of her life, after she had spoken to those around her of the love of God. Her last words were those of the Saviour: "Lord, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Several holy persons saw, at the moment of her death, that her soul, arrayed in heavenly brightness, ascended to eternal bliss. Her holy body remains incorrupt to this hour, and is greatly venerated. The miracles that God wrought by her intercession, fill several volumes. St. Catherine herself wrote two books which prove that she was not only graced by God with visions and revelations, but that she also possessed truly heavenly wisdom. Illuminated by God, she gave to many persons most wholesome advice. To one who went into a convent and desired to receive an instruction from her, she said: "Let Jesus be in your heart, Eternity in your mind, the world under your feet, and the divine will in all your actions: but above all this, let the love of God shine in your whole being." She commended nothing more earnestly to those who came to discourse with her, than the love of God, and the avoidance of the least sin for love of Him. God once showed her the horror of a venial sin, and she acknowledged that she would have expired with fear, if she had been obliged to regard this horror one moment longer. Hence it was that she guarded herself most carefully from the least shadow of sin, and admonished others so earnestly to keep their conscience unspotted.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Did you understand the lesson that St. Catherine gave to a person who went into a Convent and after which she herself moulded her life? "Let Jesus be in your heart, Eternity in your mind, the world under your feet, &c." Ah! how far are you from observing these directions! Can you say that Christ lives in your heart? Jesus does not dwell in a heart possessed by vanity, pride, envy, impure love and other sinful inclinations! Is eternity in your thoughts? How seldom you think of it! Is the world under your feet? You are devoted to all that is temporal; a proof that the world is not under your feet but in your heart! Is the divine will in all your actions? Where our own will reigns, the will of the Almighty is put aside! Does the love of God shine out in your whole life and being? You offend God so often, if not by mortal, yet by venial sins, which you do not dread! Ah, this is no sign of love to the Almighty. Those who truly love God, carefully avoid everything that is displeasing to Him. If you wish to manifest a sign of true love to God, make to-day the resolution to shun even the smallest venial sin. Impress this deeply into your innermost heart, and let it inspire you with horror of all that can offend the Majesty of God. Make the resolution that St. Catherine made: "I will sin no more, O Lord, I will sin no more!"

II. From her tender youth, St. Catherine exercised herself in severe penances. She sought every-

where to give pain to her body. This same body God glorifies now before the world by not allowing it to corrupt. How He will exalt it one day in heaven! Had St. Catherine treated her body as the children of the world do in our time, it would neither be so greatly honored now in this world, nor could it ever expect great glory in heaven. What have you to say to this? All you seek after, all you aspire to, is the well-being of your body. Hence all your care is directed towards its health, and its enjoyments, even if God should be offended by them. But this is not the right way to preserve the real well-being of the body. If you desire this, be solicitous for its eternal welfare, which can be secured only by attending to the salvation of your soul, and therefore by not allowing your body anything that is forbidden, but by bridling it and mortifying it with penances. "If we neglect the salvation of our soul, we cannot even make our body happy," writes St. Chrysostom; and St. Bernard says: "Time is given us to take care of our soul, not of our body. These are days of salvation, not of pleasures. Now we have to work for the salvation of our soul; for, upon it depends the happiness of our body. Nothing is more beneficial to the body than to be solicitous for the salvation of the soul. At present the body must be the soul's companion in suffering and doing penance, that it may also be one day its companion in the glories of heaven."

SIXTEENTH DAY OF SEPTEMBER.

ST. EDITH ROYAL PRINCESS AND RELIGIOUS.

St. Edith was a Royal Princess of England. After her mother, Wolfrudis or Wilfrith, had renounced the crown, the court and the world, and had retired into a convent, Edith, although still very young, desired to follow her and take the veil. But she only obtained permission to remain until her education was finished. Her mother herself took charge of it, and brought her daughter up as a model of virtue. Edith, after the example of her mother, devoted herself to prayers, to reading devout books, to work, according to her station, and to mortification. Outwardly she was clothed in garments which befitted her rank, but under these she wore a rough penitential robe. It was her pleasure to serve others, especially the sick, and how frightful and tedious soever the malady was, she nursed those suffering from it with tender love and solicitude, as well by day as by night. She would not be called princess, neither did she permit any marks of respect to her on account of her high birth. The king, her father, frequently sent her large sums of money, but she employed the greater part of it in comforting the sick and needy. Having thus spent several years in the convent, it became her greatest desire to join the number of the virgins who had consecrated themselves to God. Turning to God, she prayed that He might incline her father's heart according to her wishes. Meanwhile she repeated her request so often to the king, that at last he gave his consent, and she received the veil from the hands of the Bishop in her father's presence. Edith was inexpressibly happy, and once invested with the sacred habit, she hastened forward in the path of perfection. She conformed her life to the regulations of the convent, and never overstepped a single rule knowingly, so that in a short time she became a perfect example of virtue. It was the king's wish that she should become Abbess, and all the religious of the convent desired to have so holy a superior; but Edith would rather submit to the will of others than be raised above them, and she preferred obeying to commanding. After the death of her father and her only brother, Edward, the nobility resolved to withdraw Edith from the convent and raise her to the throne. The deputation came to the convent and making Edith acquainted with the res-

olution, solicited her consent. The pious princess was horrified and solemnly declared that she neither would nor could give her consent, as she had consecrated her life to God, but that even if this were not the case, she would never exchange the eternal kingdom for an earthly and transitory one. The nobility, not satisfied with this answer, made known to her by a second deputation, that they would forcibly take her out of the convent, if she persisted in her refusal. Edith was not frightened by this menace. She placed her trust in God, who inspired her with such convincing arguments to defend and justify herself, that at last they disturbed her no more. Her joy on being allowed to continue her peaceful life was much greater than others of her sex would have evinced had they been raised to the royal throne.

She continued in her pious conduct, and endeavored to increase her good works, to glorify God and the Saints and to benefit mankind. Thus, she built a large church in honor of St. Denis, at Wilton, and a hospital for the poor, and endowed both richly. This church was consecrated by the holy Bishop, St. Dunstan, at her request. This holy prelate observed that Edith, during the ceremony of consecration, several times, made the sign of the cross with the thumb of her right hand on her forehead. When, after the ceremony, he held a devout discourse with her, he praised the frequent use of the sign of the holy cross, and while taking her hand, he said prophetically, pointing to her thumb, "This finger shall never corrupt." At another time, when the holy Bishop was standing before the altar offering to the Almighty the unbloody sacrifice of Holy Mass, tears were seen streaming from his eyes. When asked why he had wept, the Saint replied, with a deep sigh: "Edith, the beloved of God, will soon be taken from us to her heavenly home. Forty-three days more, and this bright star shall be extinguished." This prophecy was fulfilled; at the expiration of forty-three days Edith ended her holy life after a short sickness. God had revealed to her the time of her death: for, one day, when as usual, she visited the Church of St. Denis, she said to her companions: "This shall soon be my resting-place." From that time she daily visited this church, and it was there, while performing her prayers, that she was seized with her last illness. No sooner had St. Dunstan been informed that she was sick, than he went and administered the Last Sacraments to her. After this she requested to be carried into the church, as she desired to end her life within its sacred walls. She was buried in the same church with great solemnities, St. Dunstan performing the funeral service. She was only twenty-three years of age, but had arrived at the summit of perfection.

She appeared, arrayed in heavenly brightness, to her mother, thirty days after her death. Thirty years later, she appeared in the same glory to St. Dunstan, and announced to him that it was the will of the Almighty, that he should raise her body and honor it with a magnificent tomb. She further told him that he would find reduced to dust all the parts of her body, which, before her conversion, had been misused in vanity, but the others, still incorrupt. The holy prelate went to Wilton, and on opening the coffin, found all as the Saint had told him. The whole body was perfect except the eyes, hands and feet; but the thumb of the right hand, with which she had so often made the sign of the cross, was also preserved. St. Dunstan raised the holy body with due reverence, and laid it under a magnificent altar. The mother of St. Edith, who was still living when this took place, was filled with inexpressible joy, on beholding the body of her holy child. Kissing it over and over again, she gave thanks to the Almighty that He had given her the grace to lead Edith from her childhood in the path of righteousness. God wrought many and great miracles on those who prayed to Him through the intercession of His faithful handmaid, Edith. This Saint is one of those infinitely happy ones who have kept their first innocence and purity inviolate; and this alone ought to be sufficient to make us highly esteem and venerate her.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Edith manifested a wonderful perseverance as well in preserving her virginity, as in her religious life. She allowed nothing to turn her from the resolution she had taken. You make many holy intentions to avoid this or that sin, to practise this or that virtue; but where is the perseverance to do what you intended? I know that you are a weak, frail human being. Satan, as well as men, endeavors to disturb you, and prevent you from keeping your resolutions. But was not St. Edith also a weak human being like yourself? Did not men and evil spirits try to disturb her and prevent her from accomplishing her intentions? She, however, remained constant. Hence, the excuse of your frailty will be of no avail before God. But do you know

what you ought to do in the knowledge of your feebleness? Pray as earnestly to the Almighty as St. Edith; place entire trust in His assistance, and work with the grace which He will impart to you; and you too will remain constant. For God is willing to help any one, who while doing all in His power, asks for divine grace to be assisted where his own strength is insufficient. "The spirit helpeth our infirmity," says St. Paul. (Rom. viii.)

II. The fact that St. Edith's eyes, hands and feet decayed, because she had used them in the service of vanity when she was still very young, while the entire remainder of her body was incorrupt, is a sign that God is displeased when we thus misuse our members. But how much more displeased must He be when they

are employed in the service of sin and vice! And how often is this done! We misuse our eyes by fastening them upon sinful or dangerous objects. We misuse the feet when we repair to places where we know that we shall be in danger of sin. We misuse the hands in transgressions against the Commandments of God by sins, on account of which countless persons have been precipitated into hell, as out of hundreds and thousands who become habituated to them, hardly one, without a miracle of divine mercy, does true penance and thus escapes hell. Examine your conscience to-day, and ascertain if you have not misused your eyes, hands and feet to offend the Majesty of God, and correct yourself if you are guilty. Rest assured that if you neglect this, those very mem-

bers with which you now transgress the Commandments of God, will one day suffer indescribable pain in hell. For, it is written: "By what things a man sinneth, by the same he is also tormented." (Wisdom, xi.) Thus those members will suffer especial pains, which in this world are used to offend the Almighty. Woe, therefore, to your eyes, hands and feet, if you employ them to dishonor Him, who in His great mercy has bestowed them upon you. It will happen to them as happened to the tongue of the rich man, who begged for one drop of water to cool it, which clearly manifested that he suffered especially in that member of his body. And why this? "Because he had sinned more with his tongue, than with any other member of his body," says St. Cyprian.

SEVENTEENTH DAY OF SEPTEMBER.

ST. HILDEGARDIS, VIRGIN AND ABBESS.

St. Hildegardis, celebrated through the whole Christian world, on account of heavenly visions, prophecies, and other divine gifts, was born in 1098, of noble, wealthy and pious parents, in the county of Spanheim, at a place called Beckelheim. Her father's name was Hildebert, her mother's, Mechtildis. They had but little trouble in the education of their daughter, as she was early instructed and led in a most remarkable manner in the path of righteousness by the divine Teacher of all good. As all her actions, her whole being, denoted the unusual disposition of her mind, they gave her, when she was only eight years old, into the charge of a pious nun, named Jutta, who was a sister of Count Spanheim, and who lived in the convent of Mount St. Disibode, under the rule of St. Benedict. Hildegardis manifested great joy when she perceived that, far from the innumerable dangers of the world, she would have an opportunity to serve God with her whole heart. Young as she

was in years, her reasoning faculties were developed, and she had a lively conception of God and of all that was pleasing to His Majesty. Jutta, her instructress, was astonished at the zeal with which Hildegardis, so young and tender, gave herself to the practice of good works. Prayers, singing psalms, serving others, and performing the lowest work in the house, were her only pleasures. All were edified by her conduct, and looked upon her as a model; hence, Jutta did not hesitate to invest her with the habit, and allowed her to make her vows earlier than was customary. No one can comprehend the consolation that filled her heart when, by these vows, she could unite herself to the Lord. Indescribable was the care she took to fulfil punctually all that she had promised to the Almighty. According to her own words, she endeavored to please God alone, her words, thoughts and actions were influenced by this single aim. After Jutta's death, Hildegardis was chosen Abbess, and though unwilling at first to become the successor of her pious instructress, yet when compelled to accept the office, she faithfully discharged all its duties. She was solicitous for the spiritual and temporal welfare of those under her charge, treated them with kindness and modesty, and encouraged them to perfection not less by her exhortations than by her virtuous example. The number of those who desired to live under her direction considerably increased, and as the convent became too small, the holy Abbess resolved to build another. God Himself appointed the place to erect it, which was a mountain near Bingen, below Mayence, called Mount St. Robert, in honor of a saintly Duke of that name, who was there buried. Hildegardis bought the place, built a convent upon it, and after receiving permission from the authorities, as well secular as ecclesiastic, she resided in it with twenty nuns. Some years later she erected another convent at Eibingen, on the other side of the Rhine in the Rheingau. Many and great were the obstacles she encountered in building these two convents, but she fearlessly persevered, as it was a work to which God Himself had encouraged her. With equal courage she also bore persecutions: trusting in the Almighty, she allowed nothing to interfere with what she had commenced in His honor. Her patience in sickness was not less invincible. "The more suffering my Jesus sends me," she said, "the more I am convinced that He loves me." Once, during thirty days, she suffered so terribly, that every one thought she would expire from the violence of the pain. Some angels, however, appeared to her, who said: "It is not yet time to depart; arise!" At the same moment her pain ceased, and her sickness disappeared. The same happened more than once to her: when her sickness

had reached its height, God ordered her to perform some particular work, and she was not only immediately well, but had also sufficient strength to do the Almighty's bidding.

It was not strange that such events were greatly admired ; but still more admiration was excited by the heavenly gifts which God had imparted to this holy Abbess, and the great number of revelations and visions with which she was graced. These began when she was five years old, and ended only with her life. At first she related everything she saw, not knowing herself what she spoke, while those who listened to her did not understand her words. When she perceived that she was specially favored by these visions, she became silent, and did not even inform the pious Jutta of what she had seen. At last, God commanded her to write down all that had been revealed to her ; but fear of men detained her. She thought that most persons would draw wrong conclusions from it, and ridicule it. This disobedience God punished by a fearful sickness, which lasted until she had acquainted her confessor with the divine command, and admonished by him, she began to write down her visions. As soon as a part of them had been recorded, they were first sent to the archbishop of Mayence and other learned men, and then to Pope Eugenius III., who at that time presided over a Council at Treves, at which St. Bernard was present. All who read them were astonished at the more than human wisdom they contained, and no one found anything to reprove in them. The Holy Father himself wrote to the Saint, and exhorted her to write down everything which God revealed to her. Hildegardis obeyed, and the fame of the divine graces bestowed upon her spread over the whole Christian world. Ecclesiastics and people of the world, high and low, came to her or wrote to her, asking her advice in different matters, or beseeching her to pray for them to the Almighty. Several letters are still extant which were written to her by popes, archbishops, bishops, emperors and kings. Her answers are also preserved, and they contain the most wholesome advice, which she unhesitatingly gave to the highest personages. These lead us to the conclusion that God had bestowed upon her the gift of seeing into the deepest secrets and of reading future events. She foretold to the Emperor Frederic I., a long but disturbed reign ; to the Archbishop of Mayence, his approaching death ; and to many cities and states the disturbances that heresy would, after many years, cause them. She had never studied, yet, when consulted on the most difficult parts of Holy Writ, or on the mysteries of the faith, she was able to expound all so clearly that the most learned were astonished. Commanded by God, she made several journeys to

Cologne, Treves, Metz, Wurzburg and Bamberg, and announced as well to the clergy as to the people what God wished her to impart to them. She did the same in many convents which she visited, admonishing all to do penance, and to observe their duties more strictly. The high consideration she enjoyed was considerably increased by the gift which God had bestowed upon her of working miracles. It is related in her biography that the blind, the paralytic, the possessed, and other sufferers, obtained all they desired, either by her prayers, or by her laying hands upon them. Notwithstanding these great gifts and graces, the holy Abbess was deeply humble: the more God overwhelmed her with favors, the more she humbled herself before Him; and to this end the many maladies with which she was afflicted were very useful to her. God also permitted her to be tormented, like Job, with terrible bodily and mental pains by evil spirits, for the space of thirty days. She heard them encourage each other, saying: "Let us deceive her, that she may lose her trust in God and blaspheme Him for allowing her to suffer so much." But in this severe struggle she was sustained by the Most High. "I know," said she to God, "that all Thou sendest me is for the best. I have merited it all. I hope that Thou wilt not thus torment my soul in the other world." After this saintly and wonderful virgin had reached her eighty-second year, she desired to be united in heaven with Him whom she had loved and honored so faithfully on earth. Her desire was granted, and the day of her departure revealed to her. She made those under her acquainted with it, admonished them to constancy in the path of perfection, devoutly received the Last Sacraments, and calmly expired after a short sickness. At the time of her death, two bows of many colors appeared in the heavens, and above them was seen a shining globe of light, which illuminated the whole convent. The holy body was buried before the altar in the choir, where it remained until the year 1632, when it was transported with the relics of St. Rupert of Bingen, to Eibingen, as the church and convent of Mount Rupert had been destroyed by the Swedes. The miracles which were wrought as well before as after the funeral of St. Hildegardis, by her intercession, were so numerous that the nuns were disturbed in their devotions by the crowd of people who came streaming to her tomb to pray. They therefore requested the archbishop of Mayence to come and command the deceased to work no more miracles at her tomb. The archbishop did as he was requested, and the holy Abbess showed herself as obedient after death as she had been in life.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. "The more suffering my Jesus sends me, the more I am convinced that He loves me," said the holy abbess Hildegardis. Some people, when visited by crosses and trials, believe that the Almighty has forsaken them, that their prayers are not pleasing to Him, or that He is angry with them. So long as everything is as they like it, when they enjoy a continual temporal well-being, when their health leaves them nothing to desire, when they are honored and esteemed, they believe that they are agreeable to the Most High. In both cases they err; for, firstly, if a man endeavors to live piously, and is yet visited by God with adversity, he may surely conclude from it, that the Almighty loves him. "Such as I love I rebuke and chastise," says God Himself. (Apoc. iii.) And his holy Apostle says: "For, whom the Lord loveth, he chastiseth." (Heb. xii.) Secondly, so far as temporal well-being is concerned, we have many opportunities to see with our own eyes, that this world's goods are given also to heathens, Jews, heretics, and other wicked people, whom we cannot, for that reason, judge to be agreeable to God. Why this is so, I have elsewhere explained to you. Learn to-day of St. Hildegardis, that God loves you when He sends you suffering, whilst you endeavor to do His will. He wishes to give you an opportunity to expiate your sins entirely on this earth, that, after death, you may so much sooner obtain salvation; or, should they be already atoned for, He wishes you to increase your merits and gain greater glory in heaven.

II. St. Hildegardis was, by the permission of God, tormented by the Evil Spirit, who endeavored to destroy her trust in God and lead her to blaspheme Him because He allowed her to suffer so much. But she conquered Satan, by renewing her faith and hope in God, and at the same time, by acknowledging that God did all things well, and that she deserved the cross that He laid upon her. Some people are troubled with blasphemous thoughts as well in crosses and trials as in other circumstances. They ought not therefore to be too much concerned, but believe that to suffer these temptations is quite a different thing from being guilty of the sin. So long as you are not pleased with them, and do not consent to them, you are committing no sin. Hence, take courage and animate yourself with the principles of your faith. Say or think: "I believe that there is a God; that this God is just and merciful, and will not overburden me, or do me any wrong; that He wishes my salvation and has promised me His grace and assistance." Awaken your trust in God, acknowledge that you deserve all you suffer and much more. Renounce solemnly in the morning all temptations of Satan, and pray to God to give you His assistance. If Satan assails you with violence, do not become faint-hearted, but speak to him as the Saviour did when He was tempted; "Away with thee, Satan! I know that I have an infinitely good and merciful God; in Him have I placed my trust." "The Lord God is my helper, therefore am I not confounded." (Isaiah, l.)

EIGHTEENTH DAY OF SEPTEMBER.

ST. THOMAS OF VILLANOVA, ARCHBISHOP.

Among the many Saints, celebrated on account of their virtues and miracles, who adorned the Catholic Church at a period when a great number of heretics revolted against her, one of the most famous was St. Thomas of Villanova. He was born 1488, in Castile, and received his surname from the city where he was educated. His parents were very pious, and besides possessing other virtues, they distinguished themselves by their liberality to the poor. Thomas followed closely in their footsteps, and even in his childhood gave all he could to the poor. The bread given him for his breakfast he laid by and gave it to the needy. More than once he took off his own coat and gave it to some poor man whom he met, and when reproved for it he said: "He to whom I gave it, needed it more than I." The same he did with his shoes and other garments. His devotion to the Blessed Virgin was so great and so constant, that he was called the child of Mary. But notwithstanding his piety and devotion he applied himself so earnestly to his studies at Alcala, that he had hardly reached the age of twenty-six years, when he was appointed to teach philosophy and theology. He kept his purity and innocence unspotted in numberless dangers, making use of the same means that preserved other Saints in similar circumstances. While he was engaged in his studies, he lost his father, and inherited from him, among other property, a large house, which he changed into a hospital. He left the world in 1518, and took the habit of the Order of the Hermits of St. Augustine, the same order of which the unhappy Martin Luther was a member in Germany, when he began to attack the Catholic religion. It seemed to be the intention of the Almighty to compensate the Order with St. Thomas for the infamous apostacy of Luther, which took place about that time. Having practised fasting, self-abnegation and mortification from his tenth year, Thomas found no difficulty in fulfilling all the duties of his novitiate. Already at that period he was looked upon as a perfect example of all virtues. Soon after he had made his vows, he was raised to the highest functions of his order, as he possessed unusual wisdom and knowledge, and he administered them to the greatest benefit and satisfaction of all the members. He was gifted

with an especial talent for preaching, and did indescribable good by his sermons. The Emperor Charles V. delighted in listening to him as often as he had the opportunity, and appointed him his spiritual counsellor and preacher at the court. The King of Portugal called him to his court, and with all his nobles paid him the greatest attention. One day, when he was asked where he obtained such deep thoughts, such wonderful perception, and how he had learned such penetrating eloquence, he replied: "The crucifix is the best instructor for preachers; and prayer is the best lesson they can learn." After the Saint had, for many years, discharged the functions of an apostolic preacher, to the salvation of thousands of souls, the emperor appointed him Archbishop of Grenada; but the humble servant of God had so much to object, that the emperor was obliged to relinquish the idea. When, however, the see of Valencia became vacant, the holy man could not again refuse obedience to his superiors; and the wish of the emperor, with the unanimous desire of the clergy and the people, forced him to accept it. The space allowed to us is too limited to relate, even partially, the labors performed by St. Thomas as Archbishop for the honor of the Church and the welfare of his flock. He united all the virtues which became his high dignity. He began by visiting his whole diocese, and afterwards charged men gifted with virtue and wisdom to do the same. He endeavored, by preaching and admonition, to uproot vice, to implant virtue, and to abolish abuses. His blameless and holy life gave to his words the greatest force; hence it was that so many conversions of the most hardened sinners, and a general reformation of morals crowned the endeavors of this apostolic shepherd.

He fared no better than the simplest brother of his Order, nor did he wear other garments; for he was wont to say: "Virtues and good works must distinguish a bishop from his flock, but not his house, garments, domestics, or costly table." No other than earthenware dishes were used at his table, and he not only observed all the fasts ordained by the Church, but also those of his Order. His bed was a straw mattress, or some vine branches covered with a woollen blanket. He allowed himself no recreation, but constantly endeavored to mortify his body. But severe as he was to himself, he was charitable and liberal to others, especially the poor. He declared frequently, that he rejoiced to be bishop, only because it gave him more opportunities to work for the salvation of souls, and to do good to the poor, than he had in the cloister. When he entered upon his episcopal functions, the canons perceived his poverty, and presented him with four thousand ducats. The Saint received them grate-

fully, but directly sent the whole sum to the hospitals and poor-houses, saying: "As the poverty which I vowed to maintain accords well with the dignity of Archbishop, I intend to live in accordance with my vow." This holy resolution he preserved until his death, and also continued his charity to the poor. Seldom a day passed on which he did not provide four or five hundred poor with food and money; besides the charity he bestowed upon the bashful poor, prisoners, and orphans. He inquired diligently for the really needy, and sent them, unasked, what he thought they required. The same charity he bestowed upon the poor artisans, day-laborers, and needy virgins. The latter he enabled, by the dower he gave them, either to enter a convent or to marry. Not many are the saints who possessed the virtue of charity in a more eminent degree than St. Thomas, and God bountifully rewarded it; for, it is well known that the grain in the barns, the money in his purse, the flour and other articles destined for the poor were miraculously multiplied. Notwithstanding these and many other virtues, constantly practised by the holy bishop, he yet feared that he was not doing enough, and that he would be unable to justify himself before his God. Hence, he prayed to the Almighty to take so unworthy a superior from his Church. God at last heard his prayer, not to deprive His church of an unworthy superior, but to reward a faithful and unwearyed servant. One day, when St. Thomas repeated his prayer before a crucifix, his heart filled with an intense desire to see God, he heard these words proceed from the mouth of the image: "Be comforted, Thomas; thou shalt receive the reward of thy labors on the day of the Nativity of my beloved Mother." From that moment the mind of the Saint was full of holy joy. He evinced more zeal than ever in the functions of his exalted station, and in the exercise of other good works, especially in deeds of charity. On the 29th of August, he became sick, and his first care was to receive the Holy Sacraments. After making a general confession, the Blessed Eucharist was brought to him in procession, and he received it with such devotion that the eyes of all who beheld him filled with tears. He then admonished them to love and fear God and be charitable to the poor. Three days before his death, he distributed among the poor of the city all that remained of his revenues. When on the eve of his death he heard that a small sum of money was still at his disposal, he said to those around him: "I entreat you, in the name of Jesus Christ, that you give it without delay to the poor: for, you can do nothing that will give me greater pleasure." The same was done with the little furniture his residence contained. When it was announced to him, on the following

day that his order had been executed, he turned towards the crucifix and said: "I give Thee thanks, O my Saviour, for the grace Thou bestowest on me in permitting me to die in poverty. Thou hast given me the administration of Thy property; I have distributed it in accordance with Thy holy will." Soon after, he recollected that the bed on which he was lying, was his own, and that he was not yet entirely poor. Immediately calling one of those in the room to his side, he said to him: "My friend, I give this bed to you; but I beg you, for God's sake, to lend it me until I am gone." Not an eye was dry at this example of entire renunciation of everything temporal. St. Thomas alone was cheerful, and desired that they would slowly read to him the passion of Christ, during which he kept his eyes fixed on the crucifix, whilst his ardent sighs showed his longing to be united with the Lord. After this, he requested to have Mass said in his room, at which he assisted with great devotion. Tears were streaming from the eyes of the holy bishop, when the priest, after the consecration, raised the sacred Host. At the elevation of the chalice, he began slowly to repeat the psalm: "In thee, O Lord, have I hoped." After each verse he paused; and at the communion of the priest, he said the last words of the psalm: "In thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me never be confounded." Then he closed his eyes, and the soul of this great and holy bishop went to the Almighty, in the sixty-eighth year of his life, in the year of our Lord, 1555, on the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin. Before and after his death, God honored him with many great miracles which were wrought by his intercession

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

I. The whole life of St. Thomas was a continued practice of charity to the poor and sick. For this he consumed almost his entire revenues. How much do you use, weekly, monthly, or yearly, in deeds of Christian charity? Do you not use much more in vanity, intemperance in eating and drinking, maintaining useless animals, or in various forbidden pleasures? Will this give you consolation in your last hour? Will you, acting thus, be able to justify yourself before God? "What will you answer to your Judge," says St. Basil, "if you have

covered the walls of your house, but have allowed the poor to go bare and naked? if you have richly decked your horses, but despised your brother because of his torn garments? if you have allowed the corn to rot, but have not fed the hungry? You have not opened your house to the poor; therefore will the gates of heaven remain closed against you." Consider what, according to your circumstances, you are able to do for the poor. Follow the admonition Tobias gave to his son: "According to thy ability, be merciful. If thou have much,

give abundantly ; if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little." (Tob. iv.)

II. St. Thomas led a holy life, and yet feared he would not be able to justify himself before God. Faith teaches you that you will have to render account, to an omniscient, just, and omnipotent Judge, of all your thoughts, words, actions, and omissions. This account will be much more difficult for you than for thousands of others, because you have received more benefits from God than thousands of others. "To whom much is given, of him much will be required," is a sentence pronounced by the Almighty. "With the increase of the gifts or benefits of God, increases also the account we have to render of them," says St. Gregory. The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah have, according to the words of Christ, not to render so heavy an account on the day of judgment, as those of Corozain and Bethsaida ; because the latter received more graces than the former. (Matt. xi.) For this reason the Jews and heathens have less to account for than the Christians. And, for the same reason, you have more to account for than thousands of other Christians. Is it possible then, that you do not fear this responsibility,

this account ? The Saints have feared, and yet you do not, although you lead an indifferent, perhaps even a sinful life ! Can this be possible ? And whence comes it that you do not fear ? Perhaps because you do not earnestly think of it, or because you imagine that the time to give an account is still very far off. In the first you are wrong, because you ought to think frequently of it, as so much depends on the issue. In the second you err no less ; for, you do not know how near or how far your death may be ; and, hence, the account which you have to render. "Behold the judge standing before the door," says St. James. (James, v.) Should He, however, still tarry a long time, you ought nevertheless often to think of it, and prepare yourself for His coming. You ought to regulate your life in such a manner, that you can justify yourself to your God. How must you conduct yourself ? Listen to the words of St. Chrysostom : "Let us keep the judgment of God continually before our eyes, and we shall surely endeavor to be truly pious ; for, as he who forgets it, falls into vices, so will he who keeps it in mind, walk continually in the path of virtue."

NINETEENTH DAY OF SEPTEMBER.

ST. JANUARIUS AND HIS COMPANIONS ; ST. CYPRIAN, BISHOP AND MARTYR.

The holy bishop, St. Januarius, was a native of Benevento, a city in the Neapolitan territory. His parents, not less virtuous than of high lineage, gave him from his earliest youth, a most pious education, and he was so earnest in his endeavors to lead a blameless life, that the clergy and laity, after the death of their

bishop, desired no other successor than Januarius. He alone opposed the election and could not be persuaded to consent, until obedience to the command of the Pope forced him to yield. Great as had been the struggle it had cost the holy man to accept the high dignity conferred upon him, he was equally zealous and untiring in discharging his duties when installed into his see. At that period, the tyrants Dioclesian and Maximian raged against the Faithful, endeavoring to destroy all christendom. The holy bishop, therefore, used all his powers to strengthen his flock in the true faith and to encourage them to allow neither torments nor death to make them forsake their God.

The teachings the holy bishop gave to others he exemplified in his own life, thus showing to his flock how to endure martyrdom. Timotheus, the Governor of Campania, received orders to force the Christians to worship the gods, or, not succeeding in this, to execute them. He resolved to begin with St. Januarius, whose zeal for the Christian faith was everywhere known. Hence the Saint was taken prisoner and presented, at Nola, to the Governor, who, making him acquainted with the imperial mandate, commanded him to obey it. Januarius, however, assured him that he would much rather die than be faithless to the true God, and by worshipping idols, become a servant of Satan. Hardly had he made this declaration, when Timotheus ordered him to be cast into a burning furnace. But it pleased the Almighty to renew the miracle which He had formerly wrought on the three youths in the furnace of Babylon. Januarius remained unharmed, and praised the only true God of heaven and earth. When the tyrant saw that not even a hair on the head of the bishop was burned, he foamed with rage, and had him stretched upon the rack, and his limbs so cruelly torn, that afterwards the holy martyr could not move one of them. Dragging him to prison they thought he would expire. The Almighty, however, to spare him for still greater tortures, gave him, after a short prayer, the full use of his limbs, to the great astonishment of the tyrant. As the latter had to set out for Puteoli, the holy bishop had to run like a horse before his chariot and was most shamefully treated by the servants. To the same indignity two deacons were condemned who had visited him in his prison. At Puteoli, all three were cast into a dungeon, where they found two other deacons and two laymen, to whom it had already been announced that they should be given to wild beasts. The same sentence was passed upon the holy bishop and his two companions. Hence, they were all seven brought into the amphitheatre, and the wild beasts let loose upon them. The omnipotence of God, who had taken from the fire the power to burn, now also

took from the wild beasts the instinct to devour. They looked at the confessors of Christ, and without in the least harming them, lay down at their feet. Timotheus ascribed this, after the manner of the pagans, to witchcraft, and unwilling to be conquered, he commanded them to be beheaded. No sooner had he given the order, than God punished him with blindness. Januarius taking pity on him, after a short prayer, restored his sight. Awed by this, as well as by the foregoing miracles, a great many of the spectators were converted to Christ. The godless Governor alone remained insensible, and fearing the displeasure of the emperor, he dared not countermand his order but had the Saint and his companions beheaded.

The body of the Saint was first brought to Benevento, but later to Naples, where it is held in great veneration on account of the protection, which, by the intercession of St. Januarius, the city enjoys from the eruptions of Mount Vesuvius. It has happened several times that when the relics of the Saint were carried in solemn procession, towards the burning waves of lava which was ejected by this mountain and came rolling onwards to destroy the city, the eruption ceased and Naples was saved. To this day, the blood of the Saint is preserved at Naples, in a glass vial. The blood is congealed; but when placed near the head of the Saint, it melts and bubbles up. This miracle, which has continued until the present time, has been witnessed by many, both Catholics and non-Catholics, and although several of the latter have ascribed it to deceit, it is impossible for them to prove their assertion.



To the life of St. Januarius, we will add that of St. Cyprian, who was also bishop and martyr, and whose name is recorded, on the 16th of this month, in the Roman Martyrology.

This man, whom St. Jerome describes as a model of eloquence and holiness, was born at Carthage, in Africa, of noble but pagan parents. Growing up, he excelled to such a degree in the art of eloquence, that he was chosen to teach rhetoric. He became acquainted with Cæcilius, a pious priest, who, convincing him of his errors, brought him happily into the pale of the Catholic Church. At holy baptism, he took the name Cæcilius in grateful memory of him who had instructed him in the doctrines of the true faith. The heathens could not comprehend so unexpected a conversion of their excellent orator, and were greatly provoked, while the Christians rejoiced and praised the Lord.

Cyprian led so pious and holy a life after he had been baptized,

that the bishop of Carthage ordained him priest. On the death of this bishop, Cyprian was elected to succeed him, but deeming himself unworthy of so high a position, he fled and endeavored to conceal himself; but being discovered and placed, almost by force, on the episcopal chair, he submitted to the divine will, and entered on his new functions. He was a most watchful shepherd to his flock, a tender father to the poor and afflicted, an invincible protector of the true faith and not only an incomparable teacher, but a perfect model of all virtues.

Some time later, in the reign of the emperor Decius, arose a terrible persecution of the Christians, which the Almighty permitted in order to renew their fervor. The Clergy of Carthage, who knew that the idolaters would first seize their bishop, advised him to leave the city, and live for some time concealed in a quiet place. The holy man at first refused to follow their advice, lest he might have the appearance of not having sufficient courage to make a public confession of his faith, or to suffer for the sake of Christ. But when he had asked counsel of God in prayer, he acted in accordance with the request of the clergy, and concealed himself outside of the city, but in a place known to the Christians. During the persecution, which lasted forty-five months, he encouraged the faithful, as well personally as also by the priests whom he had with him and whom he frequently sent into the city. He strengthened the weak and despairing, and endeavored to bring back into the pale of the Church, those who for fear of torments had apostatized. He returned to Carthage when the persecution ceased, and labored, with his unwearied zeal, to repair the great damage his beloved flock had suffered. Not long after, the barbarians invaded the land, and besides occasioning other sufferings, they took a great many Christians away as prisoners. The holy bishop gave all he possessed for their ransom, and gathered, for the same purpose, a large sum of money in his diocese. Hardly had this storm passed over, when a terrible pestilence commenced in Africa, making great havoc among the inhabitants of Carthage. The Saint left nothing undone to assist those stricken down with the dreadful disease. He visited them, administered the Holy Sacraments to them, provided them with remedies and food, and animated those who were well to follow his example, and be kind to the sick, although a great portion of the sufferers were pagans, who had proved themselves always the most bitter enemies of the Christians. This scourge left, only to give place to another; for no sooner had God restored health to the people of Carthage, than a fresh persecution of the Christians broke out under the Emperor Valerian. Aspasius, the Roman Governor at Carthage, knew that

Cyprian was the principal support of Christianity at that place, but fearing to cause a revolt, dared not seize and execute him. He therefore commanded him to leave the city, and banished him to Curubis. The holy man obeyed, but succeeded in making such arrangements, that several priests remained to strengthen and encourage the Christians in their faith. He himself wrote several letters to them from the place of his exile, in which he exhorted them to remain true to their God. When, after the expiration of a year, a new Governor came to Carthage, Cyprian left Curubis, and made his residence near the city in a garden which he had bought for the poor. He remained there almost a year, and as the crowd of Christians that visited him increased daily, one of the enemies of the faithful informed the Governor of it. The holy bishop was exhorted to avoid the approaching danger by flight; but he answered that his martyrdom had been revealed to him by the Almighty. He desired nothing more of this world but to end his life in the presence of his flock and to give them an example how to remain constant in their faith. The desire of the holy bishop was granted. He was taken prisoner and brought before the Governor, whose first question was: "Are you Cyprian?" "Yes," answered the Saint; "I am Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage!" Upon this, a written order of the Emperor was put into his hands, either to sacrifice to the gods, or to give up his life. Cyprian having read the order with unmoved heart, replied: "I will rather give my life a thousand times than sacrifice to the gods;" on which the Governor sentenced him to die by the sword, as a scorner of the imperial order. Having listened calmly to his death-sentence, the holy bishop said cheerfully: "Thanks be to God." He was followed to the place of execution by a great crowd of people, to whom he gave the most fervent exhortations not to forsake the Lord. Arrived at the place where he was to receive his death, he divested himself of his episcopal robe and handed it to a deacon, and ordered that the executioner should be paid twenty-five pieces of gold, to reward him for the stroke which should promote him to the Kingdom of heaven. He then knelt down, raised his eyes to heaven, and, with invincible fortitude, received the fatal stroke, in the year of our Lord 260. Thus ended the glorious career of this holy bishop, to whom St. Augustine, St. Jerome, St. Gregory Nazianzen, and other fathers of the Church, give the highest praise on account of his great virtues and heavenly wisdom.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Januarius preferred to be cast into a burning furnace rather than offend God by worshipping an idol. St. Cyprian would rather give his life a thousand times than draw upon himself the wrath of the Almighty by sacrificing to the false gods. Both acted wisely ; for if they had worshipped the idols they would have committed great sin. If they had died in it, St. Cyprian would not only have lost his temporal, but also his eternal life for evermore ; while St. Januarius would have been cast into a much more terrible furnace without any hope of ever being released from its torments. You act in truth very foolishly by committing a mortal sin, as you must be convinced that, if you die in it, nothing is more certain than that the fire of hell, eternal death, awaits you. You flatter yourself that you are not going to die in sin ; but who can assure you of this ? They also, who are already in hell, flattered themselves as you do, and yet they died in sin. May not the same happen to you ? You must at least confess that, by becoming guilty of a mortal sin, you put yourself in danger of dying in it, and thus going to eternal destruction. Is not that folly enough ? Still more apparent will your folly become when you consider why you place yourself in such terrible danger. Speak the truth : why do you do it ? What benefit, what advantage do those sins bring you, for the sake of which you placed yourself in such imminent danger ? Is it perhaps more than a momentary sensuality, a contemptible gain, a short pleasure ? And on account of a momentary, contemptible, short sensuality, will you place yourself in danger of being eternally condemned ? Is not that of all follies the greatest ? What I request of you is that you would

ponder well this point, and you will most certainly avoid all sin. "Consider it well," says St. Chrysostom, "quickly pass the pleasures ; eternally remain the pains."

II. St. Cyprian acted most kindly to his bitterest enemies, the heathens, at the time of the pestilence, and exhorted others to do the same. Before he was executed he gave a considerable sum of money to the executioner, who was to take his life. St. Januarius restored the sight of the tyrant who unjustly condemned him to die. That was truly living up to the words of Christ : "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you." (Luke vi.) How do you act towards those who have wronged you, or who hate and persecute you ? Do you not refuse to forgive them, wish them all possible misfortune, and harbor ill-feelings against them in your heart ? Do you not seek to revenge yourself, and to repay evil with evil ? Oh ! if you do this, say not that you are a disciple of Christ. Christ, your teacher, has instructed you to forgive wrongs, to love your enemies, to pray for them, and to do good to them. If you do exactly the contrary, how can you call yourself a disciple of Christ ? Begin to-day to be a true follower of the Redeemer, and declare before the Almighty that you forgive, with your whole heart, every wrong done to you. Cast all hatred out of your heart. Pray for those who have offended you, and if ever an occasion offers itself to do good to those who have injured you, leave it not undone. Take the crucifix into your hand and ask yourself whether your Saviour does not deserve that you should do this out of love to Him ? You have often and bitterly offended Him, and He has pardoned you. He has not revenged Himself. He has prayed for you. He has done so much good to

you, and does it daily, even after having been so often offended by you. Does He not deserve that you, after His example, should do good to your enemy? Listen to the words of St. Augustine: "Turn your eyes towards your Lord. Your enemy is

wicked, but your Lord is good. Your enemy does not deserve that you should forgive him, but your Lord deserves it a thousand times. He deserves that you forgive for love of Him. Look upon your Lord."

TWENTIETH DAY OF SEPTEMBER.

ST. EUSTACHIUS, HIS WIFE AND SONS, MARTYRS.

The life of St. Eustachius is so wonderful, that there are some who consider it a pious legend, rather than a true biography. The reason of this is, that they do not observe how miraculously the Lord often acts with His Saints, and by what unusual paths He leads them to the end which He has prepared for them. Holy Writ gives us more than one example of this, as, in Joseph, the son of the holy patriarch Jacob, and in David. The lives of these show clearly that we ought not to doubt a story because it contains many astonishing events, especially if it is proved by indisputable, ancient testimonials. As we possess these in regard to the following story, we have no hesitation in placing it before our readers.

St. Eustachius was born and educated in paganism; his name, before he was baptized, was Placidus. He sought glory in military exploits, and gave, under the Roman emperors, so many proofs of his generalship, that he became highly distinguished, and gradually rose to the dignity of a commander in chief. He had none of the vices usual to pagans, but on the contrary, conducted himself very praiseworthily. When not in the field, he passed his time in hunting. One day, while he was pursuing a large deer, it suddenly turned and stood still. Placidus was astonished to see between its antlers a Crucifix, surrounded by a bright light, and to hear from its mouth the same words which our Lord had spoken to Saul, the persecutor of the first Christians: "Placidus, why dost thou persecute me? I am Jesus, who died for love of thee, and who will save thee." Placidus, greatly surprised, fell upon his knees and said: "What dost thou wish me to do?" "Go into the city," was the answer; "seek a priest, and be baptized, with thy wife and children; and then return hither." Placidus obeyed the heavenly voice, went into the city, sought

and found a priest, who instructed and baptized him, his wife, and his two sons. Placidus received in baptism the name of Eustachius; his wife, who had been called Tatiana, was named Theopista; the elder son, Agapius, and the younger, Theopistus. After this had taken place, Eustachius returned into the forest, humbly praying that God would further make His holy will known to him. The Saviour appeared to him as before, saying: "Thou hast done well; thou hast been obedient. Now, being a Christian, prepare thyself to suffer. A great struggle is approaching; but fear not; be constant. I give thee the assurance of my assistance, and promise thee the crown of eternal glory." Eustachius, although at first frightened at these words, submitted to the divine will, knowing that the Almighty would be with him. His wife and sons entered into the same sentiments, when he had told them what had happened to him; and they all resolved to take willingly from the hand of God, all the trials with which He might be pleased to burden them. The occasion for showing their fidelity soon presented itself. By sickness and misfortune, Eustachius became so poor, that he was obliged secretly to leave the city with his family; and he determined to go to Egypt, as he was not known there. When they were already on board the ship in which they were to make the voyage, the owner of it, casting his eyes upon Theopista, ordered her to be put on shore again by force, while the ship, notwithstanding all the protestations of Eustachius, set sail. Theopista remained in the power of the godless man; but the Almighty did not permit her to be harmed; for no sooner had he laid hand on her, than God punished him with a sudden death, and thus Theopista was delivered.

Meanwhile, Eustachius continued his sad and dangerous voyage, deeply grieved at the loss of his wife. At length, he happily reached land with his sons, but at a considerable distance from the place of their destination. On their way, they came to a river, where they found neither bridge nor vessel to convey them to the opposite bank. After long deliberation, Eustachius resolved to carry one son after the other over the water. Taking the first, he carried him happily to the opposite side; but when, he returned for the second and had already reached the middle of the stream, to his indescribable anguish, he saw a lion carry off his son. Seeing that any attempt at a rescue would be madness, he turned round to go back to his other son, but before he could reach him, another wild beast seized him also and dragged him into the forest. There stood Eustachius, once so prosperous, without wife, without children, all alone, without human aid, in a strange land. The Christian hero, however, remem-

bered the words of his Saviour, and burying his grief deep in his heart, he submitted to Divine Providence. Not knowing what to do for his livelihood, he hired himself to a peasant, and served him, not without many an inward struggle, for fifteen long years. It happened that at the end of these fifteen years, the enemy invaded Italy, and the Emperor Adrian, remembering his valiant general Placidus, searched everywhere for him. They found him at last, and brought him to the emperor, who made him commander-in-chief of the entire army, and ordered him to march against the enemy. Eustachius obeyed the command, marched, in the name of the Lord of Hosts, against the enemy, conquered him, and returned, laden with rich spoils to Rome. While thus on his homeward march, he once encamped near a village to which his soldiers frequently went; and it was here that God designed to reunite the Christian hero, Eustachius, with his spouse and his two sons, whom he had long thought lost for ever. Both sons served as soldiers and were in the same army which was now returning to Rome. But they did not know each other. One day, while both were taking their dinner with some of their comrades before the door of a house in the village, they began to talk of their past life. One of the brothers said: "I am the son of a great general, who fled with my mother, my brother and myself from his home. What became of my mother I do not know; but I well recollect, that my father, when we had come to a stream, carried my brother over it, leaving me on the shore with the intention of coming back for me. Meanwhile a lion came and carried me off. He would most surely have devoured me, had not some shepherds rescued me. I remained with them, and, in the course of time, I became a soldier." The other related that a wolf had seized him, whilst he was sitting near a river; and that he had remained with the peasants who had saved him, until the war broke out, when he had joined the army. While thus speaking, the two looked at each other, and one recognized in the other his own brother. They embraced and wept tears of joy. Theopista, their mother, served in the same house before the door of which the brothers were sitting. She heard all they said, and concluded from it that they must be her sons. Going up to them, she looked at them closely, and seeing certain marks by which she could not fail to recognize them, she fell upon their necks, and while pressing them to her heart, she said, amid a flood of tears, that she was their mother. After this, they went to Eustachius, the commanding officer, to tell him what had just happened and to beg his permission to go to Rome, their native place. Hardly, however, had she begun her story, when they recognized each other, and

words fail to describe the happiness of that meeting. They all, with joyful voices, praised and blessed the power of Providence, which had so wonderfully brought them together, and against all hope had reunited parents and children. The army pursued its way homeward, and Eustachius, his spouse and sons, returned to Rome. The victorious leader was received amid the rejoicings of the people and with every manifestation of honor. The emperor, who ascribed to the gods the victory his army had won over the enemy, appointed a day of thanksgiving, when great sacrifices should be offered to them. All the officials of the state and army were commanded to take part in the solemn rite. The day came, and of all those who had been ordered to be present, Eustachius alone was absent. The Emperor desired to know the reason, and dispatched a messenger to Eustachius, who returned the answer that, being a Christian, he could not participate in a pagan sacrifice. Enraged at this, the Emperor immediately ordered Eustachius, his wife and sons, to be imprisoned. Afterwards, he tried with kindness and promises, to win Eustachius to worship the gods, but when he found that all was in vain, he had him, with his wife and sons, cast before lions. These, however, forgot their cruelty, and lying down at the feet of the holy confessors, would not harm them. Adrian, more cruel than the wild beasts of the forest, ordered the Saint, his holy wife and faithful sons, to be thrown into an immense brazen bull, made red-hot. The inhuman sentence was executed. The holy martyrs, by Divine power, remained alive for three days, praising and blessing the great Giver of life and death. At last, when their voices ceased, the bull was opened, and all four were found without life, but also without any injury to their bodies or garments. This glorious martyrdom took place in the year 120.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. "Why dost thou persecute me? I am Jesus, who died from love to thee, and who will save thee." These words St. Eustachius heard from the lips of the crucified Saviour. If Christ were to ask you the same question, what would your answer be? Behold, you persecute Christ as often as you become guilty of sin. Why do you do it? Why do you commit sin? Has your Jesus ever done you a wrong? Ah! He died for love of you, and He desires your salvation. Why then have you

so often and so deeply offended Him? Have you, perhaps, done it because you hoped to gain by sin a kingdom, or all the riches, honors and pleasures the world contains? Not even these ought to have been enough to cause you to offend your God. But you did not expect so much. Why, therefore? Speak the truth: why have you offended the Almighty? God complained, by the prophet Ezekiel, as follows: "And they violated me among my people, for a handful of barley and

a piece of bread," (Ezekiel, XIII.); that is, for something which is without value, for a temporal gain; for a contemptible sensuality; for a short pleasure in sin. Is it not this which you have sought by sin, and for which you offended your Jesus? But can you listen to these accusations, can you even think of them without the blush of shame covering your face, and without your heart, so to say, bleeding with sorrow? Oh, what is a handful of barley, a piece of bread? To offend Jesus, the adorable Saviour, who died for you, and who wishes to save your soul, to offend Him for a handful of barley, a piece of bread! Oh! what an enormous depravity! what a wickedness, deserving of hell! Prostrate yourself upon the ground, and humbly beg pardon of your Saviour; promise not to offend Him again, even if you could gain all the treasures on earth by committing one single sin.

II. How many deep sorrows had St. Eustachius to bear! How much had he to suffer! But he submitted to the decrees of Providence, and by the remembrance of the promise of divine assistance, hope sank not

within his heart. You will not have to bear trials such as his; but you should follow him so far as to subject yourself in all things to the will of the Almighty, to unite your will to His, and never to murmur against God and His judgments, and always to have a firm trust in Him. Faith teaches you that all that God permits to befall you, that all He ordains, is for your good, if you only unite your will to His. "All is regulated by divine Providence, and frequently, what we regard as a punishment, is only a remedy, a means for our salvation," writes St. Jerome. Faith teaches you also that God makes not the Cross heavier than you can bear, when sustained by His grace. Remember these important truths, and bow submissively, in all trials, to the will of the Most High. "Wait on God with patience," says the Wise Man; "join thyself to God, and endure." (Eccl. II.) "For," writes St. Augustine, "what has he to fear who rests on the bosom of the Lord? Take heed not to lose hold of this place; and all that happens to you, whatever it may be, will be for your good."

TWENTY-FIRST DAY OF SEPTEMBER.

ST. MATTHEW, APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST.

St. Matthew, the holy Apostle and Evangelist, was born at Cana in Galilee, where our Lord wrought his first miracle, by changing water into wine. The Gospel says that he was a publican or tax-collector, an office greatly despised by the Jews, first, because they considered themselves a free people, and thought the government had no right to exact taxes from them; and secondly, because those who were in this office generally defrauded the people, extorting from them more than was lawful. Hence they were classed and counted among the public sinners.

One day, when Matthew was sitting in his custom-house, in the discharge of his duty, Christ passed with His disciples, and seeing Matthew, He looked lovingly on him and said: "Follow me!" Enlightened and moved by divine grace, Matthew arose, and following Christ, invited Him into his house, where he prepared a banquet for Him, to which he invited many publicans and sinners, that they might hear the instructions of the Saviour and be converted. The Pharisees complained of it to the disciples of the Saviour, saying; "Why does your master eat with publicans and sinners?" Christ answered for His disciples and said: "They that are well need not the physician, but they that are sick." By these words, He desired to intimate that they had no cause to murmur at His associating with sinners, as one could not reasonably reprove a physician for being with the sick; and He had come into the world to convert sinners, as a physician goes to heal the sick. When the feast was ended, Matthew followed Christ and was numbered by Him among the Apostles. Having received the Holy Ghost, on the day of Pentecost, he labored like the other Apostles for the conversion of the Jews. But before going to the district appointed to him as the field wherein he had to sow the word of God, he wrote his Gospel, as a short sketch of the life, sufferings and death of the Saviour, in order to impress better the teachings of the Apostles on the minds of the newly converted. This was immediately copied a great many times and preached by the other Apostles in those countries which they were to convert.

St. Matthew went to Ethiopia and thence into the neighboring states. He began his mission at Nadabar, the capital, where he met two notorious magicians named Zaroes and Arphaxad, who, by their hellish art, caused people to become sick, after which they cured them by magic, and thus gained the reputation of performing miracles, besides which, they gathered great riches. The holy Apostle discovered the fraudulent means by which they deceived the credulous, and he admonished the inhabitants of the city, not to fear those two men, as he was preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in whose name, all such diabolical art would be destroyed. When the two magicians saw that they lost credit and gain by these remarks of the Apostle, they endeavored by new sorcery to frighten the people; but the Saint, making their fraud public, caused himself to be greatly esteemed, so that the people commenced to attend his sermons, and to take an interest in the faith he announced.

The many miracles which the Saint performed at length opened the eyes of the blind pagans; they recognized their error, and truth took possession of their hearts. What more than

all else furthered the conversion of this nation, was the miracle by which the holy Apostle raised from the dead the royal princess. Her father, the king of Ethiopia, had called the magicians to his court and requested them to give back life to his child. The wicked deceivers used all their evil powers; but the spirits of hell which they invoked, could not reanimate the lifeless body. Hence the holy Apostle, was called, who going towards the dead, commanded her, in the name of Jesus Christ, to arise. The princess immediately arose, full of life and health, in presence of the king and all his courtiers. This miracle induced the king, with his whole court, to receive instruction in the Christian faith, and to be baptized with great solemnity. The example of the king was followed by all the people, and thus was paganism conquered in that country. The holy Apostle then went into other cities, villages and hamlets, everywhere preaching the Gospel of Christ, and confirming it, according to the promise of his heavenly Master, by many and great miracles, which caused a great number of people to be converted. The holy life which the Saint led, aided him also greatly in impressing the heathens with the truth of his words. Besides his other virtues, they especially admired the rigor which he manifested towards himself. His whole sustenance consisted of herbs. Meat, wine, and all other things agreeable to the taste, he never touched. He allowed himself no rest; he was all day occupied in preaching and instructing, and passed the greater part of the night in prayer.

Incontestible writings prove that he preached the Gospel for twenty-three years, partly in Ethiopia, partly in other countries, at the same time founding almost innumerable Churches, and supplying them with priests and bishops, in order to preserve the faith he had taught. How much he had to endure in travelling through so many barbarous countries, how he was persecuted, how many thousands he converted, is known only to God; suffice it to say, he was truly an Apostle of Jesus Christ. Finally, he ended his life by a glorious martyrdom before the Altar. It happened as follows: Iphigenia, the eldest daughter of the newly converted king of Ethiopia, had not only become a Christian, but also, with the knowledge and consent of the holy Apostle, had consecrated her virginity to the Almighty, after having frequently heard the Saint preach on the priceless value of purity, and exhort others to guard and preserve it. Her example was followed by many other virgins, who, choosing the princess as their superior, lived together and occupied their time in prayer and work. Hirtacus, who succeeded to the throne, asked the hand of the princess in marriage. The virgin

consecrated to the Almighty refused him, saying that she had promised to be faithful to her heavenly bridegroom. The king, greatly provoked at this answer, called St. Matthew, as the instructor of Iphigenia, and requested him to induce her to consent to his offer. The Saint promised to give his advice to Iphigenia on the following day, in presence of the king. The next morning, in a sermon, he explained first, that matrimony, instituted by the Almighty, is in itself a lawful and holy state, which every one who desired it might enter. After this, he began to praise the state of virginity and to demonstrate that it is much more agreeable and pleasing to God than the state of matrimony, adding very emphatically, that when any one, after due deliberation, had consecrated his purity to the Almighty, the vow could not be broken without great sin. A servant, said he, among other illustrations, would deserve punishment if he dared to tempt the spouse of a king to break her marriage vow; much more punishable, then, would he be, who had the heart to entice a spouse of Christ to become faithless to her word. Hence, he concluded, as Iphigenia had promised herself to Christ, it was not allowed to rob Him of her, and persuade her to unite herself to a human being. Having admonished all present to remain constant in the true faith, even if it should cost their blood and life, he proceeded to the altar to perform the holy sacrifice of Mass. Hirtacus left the church, full of rage, and following the advice of some wicked people, sent some of his soldiers to kill St. Matthew. One of these, going towards the Saint, who was standing before the altar, thrust his spear into his body; and the Saint, sinking down, expired. Some maintain, that he was beheaded with an axe; but it is quite sure that he was killed while standing at the Altar, thus becoming himself a victim, at the moment when he was offering the pure sacrifice of the New Testament. He is called by the holy Fathers the victim of virginal purity, as he shed his blood in defending it. Hirtacus, informed of the death of St. Matthew, hastened to the house where Iphigenia and the other virgins dwelt, and repeated his demand. When she once more courageously refused his hand, he commanded her house to be set on fire, and burned to the ground with all its inmates. His wicked design was, however, frustrated; for when the flames began to arise, St. Matthew appeared and warded them off in such a manner, that neither the house nor those within it were injured. Hirtacus was punished for his evil deeds with so terrible a leprosy, that, unable to endure the sight of himself, he died by his own hands.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The holy Apostle and Evangelist, Matthew, greatly praised virginal purity, and vows of chastity made to God; but he also preached that those became guilty of sin who broke these vows. There are heretics, who wish to be called Apostolic or Evangelical Christians, as they pretend, in all things, to conform to the teaching of the Gospel and of the Apostles. But the instructions and acts of St. Matthew prove that their pretence is groundless. Luther and Calvin, the founders of this heresy, taught that marriage was commanded to every one, and that virginal purity was much less valuable than the married state; that the vow of it was unlawful and null before the Most High; whence it follows that to break the vow was not only allowed, but obligatory, as Luther broke it, and enticed others to do the same. How does this harmonize with what was taught by St. Matthew, a true Apostle and Evangelist of Jesus Christ? How can they call themselves Apostolic and Evangelical, who teach and believe the contrary of what was taught by the holy Apostle and Evangelist, St. Matthew? Further, St. Matthew, an Apostle of the Lord, admonished others to keep their virginity unspotted, and threatened those who tempted them to break their promise, with great punishment. Whose apostles are those who do exactly the contrary, and try to make themselves and others believe that the Almighty is not offended by sins against purity, as much as the priest proclaims from the pulpit? St. Bonaventure says, without the slightest hesitation: "The mouth of him, who entices others to impurity, is the mouth of a devil." The devil, who once spoke and deceived through the serpent, speaks

and deceives through such people. They are apostles of the devil. Woe to such apostles! The same hell awaits them in which the unchaste Hirtacus has already suffered a thousand years, and will suffer eternally. But woe also to those who believe such apostles and are deceived by them! Iphigenia believed and followed the apostle of Christ, and now enjoys as a recompense the eternal bliss of heaven. May you also believe the preachers, priests, and confessors, who teach what St. Matthew taught, for through them speaks the same Lord who spoke through the mouth of St. Matthew.

II. Christ, the Saviour, looked with His mild eyes at St. Matthew in his custom-house, and called him. Matthew obeyed, instantly arose, and followed Christ, becoming thus, from a publican, an apostle of the Lord, a great Saint. How comforting an example of divine mercy, even towards the greatest sinner! How wholesome a lesson! The same kind, merciful Saviour, who gazed so mildly upon Matthew, and called him, turns His loving eyes on you also, even if you live in mortal sin. He calls you to repentance; He calls you to follow Him. Obey Him as St. Matthew did, without putting it off. Let neither the greatness, nor the number of your sins detain you. Your Saviour is ready to forgive them, to receive you into His favor and to make you a Saint. "If you are a publican or a sinner," says St. Chrysostom, "you may still become an evangelist. If you are a blasphemer, you may still become an apostle." This means that you may obtain pardon and gain salvation, as St. Matthew and St. Paul did, the former of whom was a publican, a sinner; and the other, according to his own testimony, a

blasphemer. St. Augustine says the same in the following words: "Perhaps some may think that the sin they have committed is so great that it cannot obtain pardon from God. Oh! may such thoughts be far from us. Why, O man, regard only the number of thy sins, and not the omnipotence of the heavenly Physician? As God is merciful because He is gracious, and as He can be merciful because He

is omnipotent, he who believes that God will not or cannot forgive him, closes the door of the divine mercy on himself, by denying that God is gracious or omnipotent. Hence let no one doubt the mercy of God, even if he has committed a hundred, nay a thousand crimes. But this belief should incite him to reconcile himself immediately with the Almighty."

TWENTY-SECOND DAY OF SEPTEMBER.

ST. MAURICE AND HIS COMPANIONS, MARTYRS, AND ST. EMMERAN, BISHOP AND MARTYR.

The history of the church presents no more glorious or more memorable martyrdom to us, than that of a whole legion, that is of 6666 soldiers, which is commemorated to-day. This was called the Theban Legion, because it was composed entirely of the inhabitants of the Thebais, in Egypt. It had always stood high in the esteem of the Emperors on account of the valor of the soldiers and officers. In the reign of Dioclesian and Maximian, the station of these soldiers was in Syria and Palestine, while Maurice, their chief officer at that period, resided in Jerusalem. He and all under him were pagans; but having become acquainted with the bishop of Jerusalem, Maurice held many conferences with him on the subject of religion, and was led to recognize the truth so effectually, that he determined to become a Christian. Two officers, friends of his, Exuperius and Candidus, persuaded by him, followed his example, and were baptized with him. No sooner had this taken place, than he informed his soldiers of it, and spoke so emphatically of the blindness of Paganism and the light of the true faith, that they unanimously declared that they would embrace Christianity as he had done. The bishop, aided by his priests, immediately began to instruct them, and when they were sufficiently prepared, received them, by holy baptism, into the Church of Christ. The new Christian soldiers led so blameless a life, that even those born in the faith, were edified by their piety.

Meanwhile, a revolution broke out in Gaul, which the emperor Maximian at once prepared to suppress. To this end he called the Theban legion to Italy that they should join his army

Maurice came with the legion to Rome, and went to Pope Marcellinus, who received him with great joy and administered to him and his soldiers the holy sacrament of confirmation. The campaign began; they marched through Milan, and crossed the Alps. When they had reached the country of Valais, the soldiers encamped in a large valley, and the emperor appointed a day on which, by a great public sacrifice, they should invoke the gods to aid them in the approaching battle. The whole army was to be present and all were to renew the oath of allegiance. St. Maurice deliberated with his legion whether they should assist at the sacrifice or not. At last he said: "If we withdraw from the others, the emperor will be offended; but if we are present at the sacrifice, we insult God. I think that it is better to be in disfavor with the emperor than with God." All the soldiers assented to his words, and withdrawing from the heathen soldiers, they encamped near a hamlet, between the Alps and the Rhone, about twelve or thirteen miles from Geneva. The emperor, informed of it, sent to Maurice, and desired to know the reason of their absence from the sacrifice. Maurice sent the following answer: "We are Christians, and as our faith does not allow us to worship false gods, we cannot assist at the sacrifice. As far, however, as our duty as soldiers is concerned, we are ready to march against any enemy, whoever he may be, and rather to lose our lives than become faithless to the emperor." The emperor, enraged, commanded them to return to the camp and assist at the sacrifice, otherwise he would give orders that every tenth man should be put to death. The order was scarcely issued when all manifested the most intense desire to die for Christ's sake. They exclaimed that not only the tenth man of them, but all, were ready to die rather than by assisting at the sacrifice to deny their faith. While this answer was brought to the emperor, St. Maurice exhorted his soldiers to remain intrepid and undaunted, as a most glorious and important victory was at stake, a victory that could not be won by arms but by patience in suffering and in death. But they needed no exhortations; there was not one among them who did not desire to be the tenth man, so as to give his life for his faith. When the soldiers who were commanded to execute the emperor's order to decimate the legion arrived, an unprecedented example of love to Christ was displayed. Every one of the legion desired to be the tenth man, and blessed those who were put to death. After they had been decimated the emperor sent to ask whether the rest would obey his command; but they all maintained the resolution that they would obey in all things not against the laws of the Almighty; but as the emperor's command was against these

laws, they could not and would not obey. Immediately after having received this decision, the emperor again gave orders to put every tenth man to death. When this order had been executed, and the emperor was told, that not a single man in the legion wavered in his resolution, he became so enraged that he commanded his whole army to march against them, and to kill every one of them. The Thebans could easily have defended themselves or sought safety in flight; but their desire to give their blood for Christ's sake was too great to allow them to endeavor to escape death. Praising God, they laid down their arms, and like patient sheep, allowed themselves to be cut to pieces, just as it pleased the blood-thirsty heathens. St. Maurice encouraged all with inspiring words, so long as life was left him. After the massacre, a soldier named Victor came to the spot, and seeing the terrible spectacle, and having heard the cause of it, sighed and said: "Oh! if I had been here earlier, I should now be happy as they are!" Victor was asked if he was a Christian, and upon his fearlessly affirming it, was instantly killed, and thus made a partaker of the joys for which he had longed. This glorious martyrdom happened on the 22d day of September, in the year 286. In the valley where the massacre took place now stands a magnificent church, built in honor of St. Maurice and his companions.

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The holy bishop and martyr, St. Emmeran, was a native of Poitiers, in France. Having arrived at manhood, he was raised to the dignity of bishop on account of his virtues and knowledge. When he had been informed that in Hungary there were still a great number of idolaters, he determined to go and convert them, as his heart was burning with the desire to gain souls for heaven. To this end he went to Germany, and came to Ratisbon in Bavaria, whence he desired to continue his journey on the Danube to Hungary. Theodo I., Duke of Bavaria, informed of the bishop's arrival, requested him most earnestly to remain in his domains, and take care of the salvation of his subjects, as many of them were still blinded by idolatry, and others very imperfectly instructed in Christianity. The Saint, considering that he might be able to work in Bavaria for the salvation of souls as well as in Hungary, acquiesced in the Duke's request, and immediately began to exercise his apostolic mission in the Capital. By his daily exhorting, preaching and instructing, the Christians soon had a better knowledge of their faith, while they were also inspired to perform, with more devotion, all those duties which

the Church demands of her children. Those who were still in the darkness of paganism, he brought by the same means into the right path, leading them entirely away from their errors. As soon as St. Emmeran perceived that the Capital was in an improved condition, he went into the other towns, villages and hamlets of the Duke's dominions. Laboring there as he had done in the Capital, he saw, with great joy, that, by the grace of the Almighty, the result was the same. After the holy man had thus labored with unwearied zeal for three years, important affairs called him to Rome; but on his way thither, he ended his life by a cruel martyrdom. The circumstances were as follows. Uta, a daughter of the duke, had been seduced by Siegbald, a wicked youth of the nobility. As soon as she became aware of the greatness of her crime, she went to the holy bishop, and confessing her misdeeds to him, she begged him to assist her. The Saint, having first admonished her to do penance, advised her to leave her country for a time and take refuge in Italy, where he would take care of her until he had reconciled her with her father. This advice, which he had given her with the kindest intentions, he revealed to a pious priest, that the latter might know the reason why Uta followed him. After the holy bishop had commenced his journey, the unhappy Uta secretly left her home, but was soon overtaken and called to account. She confessed her intentions and her reasons for acting thus; but she laid the blame on St. Emmeran, in order to save Siegbald from a cruel death, which would otherwise have been in store for him. She did not suppose that her father would punish the bishop; because he was already far on his journey, and on account of his high dignity. Perhaps she also thought that this falsehood would sooner secure her pardon. Landbert, a brother of Uta, blinded by rage, determined immediately to revenge the disgrace of his sister and the ducal house. Mounting his horse, he hastened after the bishop and found him at Helfendorf, still on Bavarian territory. It was three o'clock in the morning, and the Saint was at his devotions with his companions, when Landbert, with a torrent of invectives, rushed up to him. The holy bishop, to whom heaven had revealed what was to happen to him, endeavored to protest his innocence. He appealed to the Pope, saying that it was he who might judge him; but Landbert refused to listen. He had the holy man bound on a ladder, and limb after limb cut from his body, so as to make his death slow and his suffering excruciating. The unmerciful executioners did as they were ordered. They cut one finger after another from the hands of the Saint; then they cut off his ears and nose; cut out his eyes; tore his tongue from his mouth; then lopped off his

hands and feet, and left him thus mutilated and weltering in his blood.

The holy bishop manifested during this barbarous martyrdom an invincible patience, prayed to God for his tormentors, and implored His aid as long as speech was left him. When Landbert and his executioners were on their way home, the companions of the bishop, who had fled, returned, and with the assistance of the inhabitants of Helfendorf, placed the body of the Saint into a vehicle and thus transported it to Aschheim, where it was buried with all due honors. God soon after brought the innocence of the bishop to light; and the many miracles which were wrought at his shrine gave incontestable evidence of it. Duke Theodo, deeply repenting of his suspicion and crime, had the holy relics brought to Ratisbon, and was present when they were placed in the chapel of St. Gregory. He tried thus to make amends, in some measure, for the great wrong done to the Saint. Some years later, a magnificent church and monastery were erected at Ratisbon, in honor of St. Peter and St. Emmeran, which still exist and are widely celebrated. Uta, the slanderer, was sent by the Duke into banishment; and passed the remainder of her life in great suffering. Landbert, the ferocious man, fled to Hungary, where he died in great misery.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Read once more the excellent reply which St. Maurice gave to the imperial messengers, when he said that he and his soldiers could not assist at the heathen sacrifice, because the Christian faith would not permit it; as far, however, as their duties as soldiers were concerned, they were ready to fulfil them at the cost of their lives. This should teach all Christians, and especially all domestics, an important lesson. "No one can serve two masters," says Christ, (Matth. vi.) if these masters give contradictory orders. It is indeed very certain, that a soldier or a domestic, must serve not only the Lord, his God, but also his officers, his master or mistress, so long as nothing is demanded which is against the laws of the Almighty. If, however, an officer, a master, a mistress, a su-

perior, commands anything that is wrong, and, therefore, forbidden by God, as the Emperor did to St. Maurice and Landbert to his servants, in such cases, we must obey God and not men, be they lords, princes, kings or emperors. God is a greater Lord than any upon earth, and Him all must obey. No servant can command anything that his master has emphatically forbidden, and should he do so, our reason would teach us to obey the master and not the servant. All the people of this earth are subjects, servants of God, even kings and emperors. Hence, should they command anything that God has forbidden, we must obey God, not them. Therefore the servants of Landbert did the same wrong that those of Absalom had done; those, by his command, killed the innocent

St. Emmeran; these took the life of Ammon, although the Almighty has forbidden to take the life of the innocent. Learn from this how you have to act, if your master, your mistress, or any one else, commands you to do wrong. You must obey God, and as St. Maurice and his companions did, disobey the command. And not even the fear of falling under the displeasure of those who command you to do wrong, nor any temporal loss that may follow, must have the power of persuading you to act differently. Think and say as St. Maurice did: "It is better to fall into disgrace with a mortal man, than to arouse the wrath of the immortal King of heaven and earth." The displeasure of God is more to be feared than that of men. The injury you do to yourself by being disobedient to God, is immeasurably greater than what you have to fear when you rightfully disobey man. The displeasure of men and the loss you may sustain, will end; because man is mortal and the loss temporal. But the loss which you will sustain for being disobedient to the Lord, and the displeasure of the Almighty, will never end; because God is eternally your Lord. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb. x.)

II. St. Emmeran, desiring to win souls for heaven, travelled into foreign lands, and labored there until his end for the salvation of men. God does not demand of you that you should journey into foreign lands for the same reason; you can gain, in your own house, or at the place where you live, many a soul, by leading others to follow your example in the right path, and keep-

ing them from evil. Should you not have opportunity to do this, save, at least your own soul and secure your future life by your Christian conduct. Let neither inordinate love for your own body, nor any other temptation induce you to place your soul in danger of losing everlasting life. For if your soul is unhappy, your body will be unhappy. And what will all else that you have acquired with so much pains, avail you, if your soul goes to perdition? If it is once lost, no help can reach it. "Nothing is more precious than the soul of man," says St. Lawrence Justinian, "because it is adorned with the likeness of the Almighty, and bought with the blood of Christ. Whoever has once lost it, cannot in all eternity regain it." "For what does it profit a man," are the well known, but never sufficiently pondered words of the Saviour, "what does it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?" (Matth. xvi.) What does it profit? "What hath pride profited us?" say the condemned in hell, "or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us? All those things are passed away like a shadow." (Wisdom, v.) The reprobates now understand well that the gain of a whole world is nothing in comparison with the loss which we suffer in our souls by sin. The gain passes, but the loss remains for ever. This knowledge has however, come too late and is of no use to them. Do you take advantage of it, as it may still be of use to you. Desire nothing that may injure your soul, as you may eternally and uselessly regret it with the condemned in hell.

TWENTY-THIRD DAY OF SEPTEMBER.

ST. THECLA, VIRGIN AND MARTYR.

In the writings of the ancient Fathers of the church, the memory of the holy Virgin and Martyr, St. Thecla, is highly praised; as she was the first woman who was sentenced to torments and death on account of her faith. She was born at Iconium, a city in Lycaonia, of pagan, but rich and noble parents; and in the whole city there was no maiden who could be compared with her in beauty and talents. Tamyris, one of the richest young men of the nobility, asked her hand in marriage, and as her parents favored his suit, Thecla engaged herself to him. At that period, St. Paul came to Iconium, and lodging in the house of Onesiphorus, an honest and industrious man, began to preach the Gospel of Christ. Led by curiosity, Thecla with many others, went to hear the new preacher, and God, full of mercy, enlightened her understanding in such a manner, that she, comprehending the truth of the Christian faith, resolved to embrace it. She not only proceeded immediately with her resolution, but having heard the Apostle preach of the great value of virginal purity, she resolved to consecrate her virginity to God, although she was only eighteen years of age, and, as related above, engaged to be married to Tamyris.

Her parents soon perceived by her altered conduct, what had taken place in their daughter's heart. They called her to account, and Thecla unhesitatingly confessed that she had become a Christian, and desired no earthly spouse. Not at all satisfied with this resolution, her parents endeavored by all possible means to induce her to forsake the true faith. At first they used great kindness, but when that did not succeed, they had recourse to menaces and severities, even whipping and maltreating her in various ways. Seeing that nothing could influence Thecla, they went so far in their rage, as to denounce their own daughter before the judge as a Christian, and desired that she should be burned alive, as a warning to others. The judge called Thecla before him, and asked her if the accusation of her parents was true. Thecla affirmed it, confessing before the judge, as fearlessly as before her parents, that she had embraced the Christian faith, and in it was determined to live and die. After this confession, the judge, in accordance with the desire of the

parents, ordered the stake to be prepared for her execution. But before the executioner had time to touch her, Thecla, inspired by God, making the sign of the cross over herself and the burning pile, leaped with a cheerful countenance into the midst of the flames. But, behold! although the flames passed over her head, Thecla stood unharmed in the midst of them, and praised God, like the three heroes in the furnace of Babylon. While all present were marvelling at this, a heavy shower darkened the sky, and not only extinguished the fire, but drove all the spectators away.

The emperor Nero was at that period in Antioch, and when he was informed of this occurrence, he desired to see Thecla. The Christian heroine presented herself fearlessly before him, and declared most emphatically that she would live and die in the true faith. The tyrant, not willing to lose time either in persuasions or menaces, ordered the undaunted confessor of Christ to be cast before wild beasts. She was led to the amphitheatre, where Thecla, on bended knees and with eyes raised to heaven, called on her heavenly bridegroom to assist her. The wild beasts were let loose, but not one of them attacked the virgin, or did her the least harm. They walked around her like tame dogs. The tyrant, ascribing this miracle to magic, ordered St. Thecla to be bound to the tails of two wild steers, which were to be goaded with red-hot irons, that they might become infuriated and tear the supposed magician to pieces. All was done as the tyrant commanded, but the animals allowed themselves to be burned and pierced, but still moved not from the place where they stood. A new cruelty was now planned. Not far off was a deep pit, filled with serpents and other venomous reptiles; into this pit they cast the fearless Christian heroine. Signing herself with the holy cross, she remained unharmed.

Great was the number of the heathens who were converted at the sight of such miracles. Among these was Tryphena, a highly respected matron, who exclaimed aloud: "Truly, the God whom Thecla worships, is the only true God. To Him we must pray, and to none other." The same was said by many, and the tyrant began to fear that a public desertion of paganism would take place. To prevent this, as some say, he had St. Thecla secretly executed, while others write, that having regained her liberty, she returned to her home, where, by her virtuous life and zealous instructions, she converted many to the Christian faith, and that she departed this life in the ninetieth year of her age. One thing is certain, that St. Thecla has always been considered by the whole Christian world as one of the most heroic martyrs, and as such, has received due honors. In the prayer which the Cath-

olic church has instituted for the dying, St. Thecla is mentioned in the following words: "As thou, O Lord, didst save the holy virgin and martyr, Thecla, from three cruel torments, so do thou graciously save the soul of this, thy servant, that he may partake with thee of the heavenly joys." St. Gregory Nazianzen writes, that a numberless crowd of people of the East, visited the tomb of St. Thecla, in Seleucia, because God wrought great miracles there; and he relates that he himself had repaired thither, actuated by devotion. Among other titles of honor which the holy Fathers have given to St. Thecla are the following: "Protomartyr"; which means that she was the first female martyr; and, "first born spiritual daughter of St. Paul," because she was the first of her sex who was converted by his sermons at Iconium, and who, following his advice, consecrated her virginity to God.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. As soon as St. Thecla had learned the priceless value of virginal purity from the sermons of St. Paul, she determined to consecrate her virginity to God; and neither persuasion, menaces, torments, nor death could change her. Oh! what great wrong do those commit, who forfeit virginal purity in a wanton, sinful manner. They know not its value; hence they do not esteem it as highly as they ought. If you desire to know its value, consider what Christ our Lord and his Saints have done. The three holiest persons, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, lived in virginal purity. Jesus chose as His mother a virgin, and His Foster-father and His Precursor were virginal souls. He would be subject only to those who lived in virginal purity. Among His Apostles, none was so dear to Him as John, who had always lived in virginal purity. It was John who rested upon the breast of Jesus at the last supper; to John He commended His holy Mother. It was His desire that the first two martyrs, Stephen and Thecla, should be virginal souls. In heaven, He bestows upon the virgins an espe-

cial crown, an especial glory, as has already been said. On earth He shows them especial favor, and frequently assists them miraculously by His holy Angels, as is known from the lives of many holy virgins. As far as the Saints are concerned, it is known that many of them esteemed virginal purity more than all honors and riches, than kingly crowns and sceptres, more even than their lives; and that they endured all possible tortures rather than lose their virginity. If one would gather all that the holy Fathers have written in praise of virginity, it would fill more than one large volume. You can judge from this how inestimable a treasure purity must be. Have you lost it sinfully? Then regret it as long as you live. Do you still possess it? Then esteem it as it ought to be esteemed, and guard it with the utmost care.

II. St. Thecla added the merit of martyrdom to that of her virginal purity; hence, in heaven, she wears the double crown of virgin and martyr. You have no hope of gaining the crown of martyrdom like St. Thecla; but you must know that the holy Fathers, Ambrose and

Chrysostom, teach that we can be martyrs in a certain way, when we endeavor to live chastely. Yes, he who leads a truly Christian life, must suffer a kind of martyrdom. The martyrs had to battle with tyrants, who combated their resolutions, sometimes with soft persuasions, sometimes with menaces and torments. Whoever will live chastely and like a true Christian, has to fight with the world, the flesh and Satan. This kind of martyrdom we all have to suffer, and we must all fight valiantly against these enemies of our salvation. If we allow them to conquer us, we shall lose the crown of everlasting glory. But if we remain constant and gain the victory, with divine assistance, we may say at the end of our days,

with St. Paul: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. As for the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice" (II. Timothy, iv.). An especial crown will be the reward of him who fights valiantly, in this world, against the outward and inward enemies of purity; for, as St. Augustine writes: "Among all the combats of the Christians, none are more severe than those fought to preserve purity." Hence, the crown of those who conquer the enemies of purity must be much more glorious than all others. "Chastity makes men martyrs," says St. Ambrose; therefore, those who preserve it unspotted, gain the crown of martyrdom.

TWENTY-FOURTH DAY OF SEPTEMBER.

ST. GERARD, BISHOP AND MARTYR.

The holy bishop, Gerard, who, according to the Roman, Martyrology, deserves to be called the Apostle of the Hungarians, was born at Venice, of very pious parents. He received in a Benedictine monastery his first lessons in the liberal arts, and at the same time a thorough instruction in virtue and holiness. It was there that he imbibed the Apostolic zeal, which, in after years, he so unceasingly practised. As he became older, he felt an irrepressible desire to go to Jerusalem and visit the holy places. After this pious wish had been satisfied, he, by a dispensation of Providence, returned by way of Hungary, where the holy king Stephen received him most kindly. Perceiving in the holy pilgrim, besides great wisdom and talents, an ardent zeal for the salvation of souls, the king requested him most earnestly to make his residence in Hungary, and to assist him in the great work he had begun of converting the entire nation. Gerard consented, but to be better prepared, he went, with his companions, into a desert, and remained there a considerable time, praying, watching and fasting. After this, he commenced the work

of conversion with zeal and success, and continued it with unwearied constancy, which caused the king great joy.

Meanwhile, the see of Chonad became vacant by the death of the bishop, and the king desired Gerard to fill it, as it would increase his authority with the people, and aid him in his apostolic labors. The holy man refused to accept the dignity, until commanded to do so by the Pope. Being installed in his office, he endeavored with still greater zeal than before to exterminate idolatry, and to disseminate everywhere the true faith. To progress still more effectually in his holy work, he endeavored to gain, by an especial devotion, the mighty protection of the Blessed Virgin. He tried also to inspire those in his charge with great veneration for the Divine Mother. He built, near the Church of St. Gregory, a beautiful chapel in her honor; and erected in it a most magnificent altar, at which he passed almost all the time left him from his labors. Before this Altar stood a silver censer, which day and night was filled with the most precious incense, to which end he had made an endowment, according to which, two pious men alternately took care of it, supplying it with coal and incense. The custom among the Hungarians of not lightly pronouncing the name of Mary nor giving the same to their children in baptism originates from this bishop, who inspired them with so deep a veneration for the Divine Mother, that they call her only, "Our Lady." They bow their heads or bend their knees when they hear her sacred name. Some ascribe this custom to the holy king, St. Stephen; and we may suppose that both had part in it, as the devotion of both to the Divine Mother was very great. It is known that St. Gerard never refused anything when it was asked of him in the name of the Blessed Virgin. He always manifested a fatherly love for the poor and infirm, and more than once gave his own bed to sick persons, even to lepers, while he passed the night in prayer, or slept on the bare floor. He mortified his body by fasting and by wearing a rough hair-shirt. The grace of God was visibly with him in the conversion of the infidels, of whom he brought great numbers into the pale of the Church by his sermons, as well as by his holy conduct. After the death of St. Stephen, a certain Abbas usurped the throne, banished the grandson of king Stephen, who was the rightful heir to the throne, treated most cruelly the other relations of the late king, and forced the people to acknowledge him as their sovereign. This tyrant demanded to be crowned by St. Gerard, which the Saint, however, fearlessly refused, prophesying that he would die most unhappily after three years, if he desisted not from his cruel injustice. The tyrant did not regard the prophecy, and died according to the

Saint's words. After him, Peter, a grandson of St. Stephen, came to the throne, and treated his subjects so cruelly, that they conspired against him, tore out his eyes, and expelled him from the country. During the reign of the next king, Andrew, a persecution of the Christians took place. As the king was not earnest enough in opposing and punishing those of his idolatrous subjects who persecuted the faithful, St. Gerard, accompanied by three other bishops, went to Buda, where the king resided, and representing to him the state of affairs, menaced him with divine vengeance in case he refused to aid the Christians, and prevent the heathens from further persecuting them. Before St. Gerard left Buda, after offering to the Almighty the holy sacrifice of Mass, he said that he and his companions would suffer martyrdom for Christ's sake, on the following day. His words proved only too true. Several infidels, who well knew that they had no one to fear more than St. Gerard, and who had also been informed of his mission to the king, entered into a conspiracy, and the next day, led by an apostate Christian, went to meet him. As soon as they saw him from afar, they threw stones at him and his companions, and coming nearer, they overturned the wagon in which the holy bishop was travelling, and commenced to abuse him most barbarously both by words and deeds. The Saint, after having been cast down and trodden upon, made an effort to rise, but sank upon his knees and exclaimed with the proto-martyr, St. Stephen: "Lord, do not call them to account for this!" He further prayed in the words of Christ: "Pardon them, O Lord, for they know not what they do." The assassins became still more enraged by his resignation, and maltreated him until every sign of life was extinct. To be sure of his death, one of them pierced his heart with a lance. Thus did this great Apostle of the Hungarians end his holy life by a glorious death, in the year 1046.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. St. Gerard manifested great zeal in honoring the Virgin Mother, and her holy name. To increase devotion to her, he exhorted the faithful to adopt the custom of bowing their heads when the name of Mary was pronounced. After the most holy name of Jesus, there is none which ought to be more respected than that of His Mother; hence those Catholics act rightly who outwardly give marks of their</p>	<p>honor when they hear or pronounce it. Those do wrong who name the Queen of Heaven without any reverence. It is known of many Saints, that they called upon this holy name in the hour of suffering and temptation, and visibly received help. Follow them; for, St. Bonaventure says, that after the invocation of the name of Jesus, that of the name of Mary is most wholesome and comforting. In our coun-</p>
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try and in many others, the custom is not observed which St. Gerard instituted in Hungary, of not giving the holy name of Mary in baptism; but they who bear this name ought to know that they are especially obliged to imitate the virtues of her by whose name they are called. "For," says St. Chrysostom, "the name alone profiteth nothing;" on the contrary, it brings shame and disgrace to those who, while they bear it, live so different a life from that of the Blessed Virgin.

II. St. Gerard had great love for the poor and sick, and also for his enemies and persecutors. Following the example of St. Stephen and of Christ, he prayed for the latter, while he assisted the former with all his power. Towards himself he did not use such tenderness. He mortified his body most austere by fasting and wearing rough hair-shirts, and deprived himself not only of unlawful, but even of innocent comforts. The Saints deemed it necessary to act thus, in order to secure their salvation. Have you acted in a similar manner? Determine at least to do so from this day. Be compassionate to your neighbor and assist him by words and deeds whenever you have the opportunity. With yourself, you ought not to be so very tender, and not avoid so carefully everything that is wearisome to your body, and which the law of God, or of the Church requires of you; nor should you endeavor to procure for your body all it desires, though perhaps forbidden by the laws of God or the Church. By doing this you show that you

love your body more than your soul, more than your God. Adam, indeed, loved Eve more than the Almighty; as he, when requested by her, did what God had forbidden him; and hence made himself and Eve unhappy. You make your soul and your body unhappy, if you follow the desires of your flesh against the will of the Most High. Take care that you belong not to those of whom St. Bernard writes: "Many are indignant that Adam rather obeyed the voice of his wife than the voice of the Almighty; and yet they daily obey Eve, their body, more than their Lord and God." If you obey your flesh when it demands anything that God has forbidden, you injure it more than I can well explain to you. "The flesh can never be of more importance," says St. Bernard, "than the salvation of your soul." This, however, you lose, if you obey the flesh against the Commandments of God, and choose to live in all things after its desires. But you labor for your salvation and further it, if you permit nothing to your body which you cannot do without committing sin. Still more will you advance in the path to heaven, if you sometimes refuse to your body, from love to God, even that which you could permit it without doing wrong, and if you would sometimes chastise it with voluntary penances, as St. Gerard and hundreds of other Saints have done. This would be of the greatest benefit to your body, as it has been to that of St. Gerard and other Saints. Of such a body, St. Paul writes: "It shall rise in glory and power" (I. Corinth. xv.).

TWENTY-FIFTH DAY OF SEPTEMBER.

ST. NOTBURGA, VIRGIN.

Notburga, a pious, faithful and holy maid-servant, was called by God, in the month of September, in the year of our Lord 1313, to receive in heaven the reward of her virtues. Her example should be followed by all who are placed in a similar station. She was born at Rottenburg, in 1266, of very pious, though indigent parents. At the age of eighteen years, she went to live with the people of the castle, from which Rottenburg derived its name. She was placed in the kitchen, and fulfilled her duties with so much fidelity and ability, that at last she was charged with the care of the entire household. She was perfectly satisfied with her situation, although it was but low in the eyes of the world, and only thought how she could worthily serve God in it and gain her salvation. She began each day with fervent prayer, and if it had to be short, on account of her work, she yet said it with heartfelt devotion. Early in the morning she offered to God all her labor, all the sufferings she might have to endure through the day, and humbly prayed to be guarded from even the smallest sin. She obeyed her master and mistress in everything, after the admonition of St. Paul. She was never seen impatient, ill-humored or discontented when she was at her work, and every moment she could spare she gave to prayer, or to reading a pious book. She never desired to visit the places where others of her station passed their time in dancing or other amusements, which so easily become dangerous; as she was convinced that no one returns from them more pious, but generally more frivolous and wicked. In one word, she lived in such a manner, that she might have been held up as an example to all servants. She had the most intense pity for the poor, and therefore asked leave to give them what was left from the table. The permission was given her, and Notburga, greatly rejoiced, made use of it without in the least overstepping the bounds set to her, as she was scrupulously honest. She never took the least thing for herself, nor gave away anything without the knowledge and consent of her master. Although she had greatly to suffer on this account from the other domestics, she respected more the commandments of God and the orders of her master than the unrighteous requests of her fellow-servants; she feared to offend

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God more than man. In consequence of this and of her other good qualities, Notburga was very much esteemed by her master and mistress. They intended to keep her always with them, and advised their son Henry, if he desired to have the blessing of God in his house, not to part with Notburga, nor to oppose her in her charity to the poor. No sooner, however, had Henry's parents closed their eyes, than Ottilia, Henry's spouse, forbade Notburga to give her usual alms to the poor, commanding her to cast all that was left from the table to the swine. The pious girl took this very much to heart, but obeyed her new mistress; and in order to leave the poor some little comfort, she took, on some days, nothing but a crust of bread and some water, and gave her own food away, as this had not been forbidden her. But at length even this was not allowed by her hard-hearted young mistress, under the pretext that it was drawing all kinds of vagabonds to the castle, who sooner or later might do a great deal of mischief. She also told Henry that Notburga carried more out of the house than she was permitted, and ought therefore to be dismissed for dishonesty. Henry desired to convince himself personally of this, and one day saw Notburga in the act of carrying in her apron the little she had saved from her own victuals for the poor. When he asked her what she was carrying away, she opened her apron, in which he saw nothing but shavings, whilst in the jar, which she also carried, he tasted strong lye. He related this to his wife, desiring to shield the innocent girl; but Ottilia believed that this was all done to deride her, and after having overwhelmed Notburga with abuse, she gave her notice to quit the house.

The uncharitable lady was soon visited with divine punishment. She became dangerously sick on the same day, and Notburga, forgetting every wrong done to her, nursed her with unwearied kindness. As the physicians pronounced the sickness fatal, the pious servant spoke most kindly to her mistress, exhorting her to receive the holy Sacraments, encouraged her to bear her sufferings patiently, and did not leave her until she expired. A terrible noise, which was heard during the following night in the stalls of the swine, prevented every one in the castle from sleeping. A priest was called, who asked the restless spirit, with the usual exorcism, who he was and why he made such disturbance. The following answer was received: "I am the soul of Ottilia; and although I have escaped hell by partaking of the holy Sacraments, I have been condemned to remain some time here, on account of my want of charity to the poor, and because I ordered the food that was left from my table to be given to the swine rather than to the needy." The dismay and fear which

this event excited in all who heard of it, may be easily imagined.

Notburga did not wish to remain longer in the castle, and as she had been notified to leave before Ottilia became sick, she hired herself to a farmer who lived about a mile from Rottenburg. The farm, called Eben, was very lonely, situated between mountains and cliffs. Not far from it was a small chapel, dedicated to St. Rupert, where Notburga passed many an hour after having finished her daily toil, especially on vigils, Sundays and holidays. She led, in all other respects, the same life which she had led for many years at the castle. Henry, the lord of the castle, soon perceived that the blessing of God had departed from his dwelling with Notburga. One misfortune after another befell him, his fields and his cattle. Hence, he endeavored to bring the pious girl back to her old place. Going to her, he begged her to pardon the wrong which had been done her, and entreated her to return to the castle, promising that in regard to the poor, she should have the same privileges she enjoyed while his parents were living. Notburga refused to leave the farm without the consent of her master; but when Henry had obtained leave for her to return, she hesitated no longer; and the blessings of heaven returned to the castle with her. She remained until her end the same pious, industrious, obedient, charitable servant she had always been.

When forty-seven years of age, she felt that her end was approaching, and having prepared herself carefully, she ended her holy life, after a short struggle, on the 14th day of this month, in the year 1313. Being asked by Henry, before her death, where she wished to be buried, she replied: "In the place to which two oxen, without a driver, shall carry my body."

As soon as she was dead, Henry ordered that her body, in a coffin, should be placed upon a wagon to which two oxen were yoked. The gates of the castle were then opened, and the oxen, leaving the court-yard, proceeded on the high road. Having walked onward for some time, they turned suddenly towards the river Inn, and as there was no bridge across it, they stepped into the water and brought the body safely to the other side. Henry, who had followed with some servants, crossed the river in a boat. The oxen went quietly on, until they came to a cross-road, where they stood still and rested for a short time. The coffin was about to be taken from the wagon, but the oxen moved forward on the road to Cassbach, and thence to Eben, the farm where Notburga had lived for some time. At the wall which encloses the chapel of St. Rupert, they again stood still. Here, then, it was thought, was the place where Notburga wished to be buried;

but the oxen, with a quick movement, went into the chapel and re-appeared, a few minutes later, with the empty wagon. Henry and the others went into the chapel, where, to their astonishment, they found the coffin before the altar, placed there without the aid of human hands. No one could understand how the animals could have turned the wagon in the narrow chapel and draw it out again; and all acknowledged that the hand of God had wrought this miracle in order to glorify His faithful servant among men. As there could now be no doubt as to the resting-place of the holy body, a tomb was prepared in the chapel, in which the remains of the Saint were laid with due reverence. The chapel was afterwards enlarged, and St. Notburga was placed among the guardian Saints of the country.

St. Notburga is represented with a sickle in her hand, for the following reason. When, as related above, she hired herself to a farmer, she made the condition that, on all vigils, she might stop her work when the bells of the church rang, to prepare herself, by prayer and other devout exercises, for the next day's feast. The farmer had consented to this; but when, one Saturday, after the bells had rung, some corn remained to be cut, he would not allow Notburga to leave the field, saying that she should first finish her work, and that it would not be displeasing to God, if in such a trifle she departed from her usual custom. She answered: "You may think so, but I think differently. Heaven shall decide who is right. I will hang my sickle in the air. If it falls down, it shall be a sign that you are right; but if it does not fall, we will believe that I am right." The farmer acceded to this. Notburga hung her sickle in the air, where it remained suspended, to the great astonishment of all present, who henceforth esteemed still more highly the pious hand-maid of the Lord. As well this, as the other event, related above, was seen by many, and after having been severely tested, was found to be true. In regard to the latter miracle, it is proper to add that Notburga had made the condition above stated, by special inspiration from God; otherwise her act might seem to have been a presumptuous tempting of the Almighty.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. All domestics may learn from the life of St. Notburga, how they must conduct themselves if they wish to live piously in their station, and gain salvation. Before all things they ought to be satisfied with the station in which it has pleased God</p>	<p>to place them. Early in the morning, daily, they should piously say a prayer, if only a short one, and offer to God everything they will do, and all that will happen to them during the day, begging the Almighty to guard them from all sin. They</p>
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should be faithful in their work, as well as in the management of that which has been intrusted to them. Without the permission of their masters, they ought not to take anything for themselves or for others, no matter how much they may suffer from their fellow-servants. If, during the day, they have time left from their work, they should employ it profitably in praying or reading devout books. They should also sometimes, while at work, for instance when the clock strikes, raise their thoughts to God, renew their good intentions, and pray God to bless them. To the poor, they ought not only to be kind in their heart, but also in deeds, though never without their master's permission. They should also mortify themselves voluntarily in eating and drinking. Sundays and holidays they ought to spend piously; and not only abstain from all unnecessary work on these days, but also exercise themselves in good works. There is no law which obliges us to abstain from work on the eves of great festivals, as St. Notburga did, to prepare for the following day. We may without transgressing the laws of the church, work until 12 o'clock at night, for at that hour begins the next day, which lasts until 12 o'clock the next night. If, during these twenty-four hours,—the entire holy-day—we should, without necessity, perform menial labor for any length of time, whether during the day or night, before or after mass, we commit great sin. Masters do not less wrong if they permit such work, and they become still more guilty if they command it. I have already spoken of this elsewhere, and have advised servants how to act on such occasions. No servant ought to let himself be persuaded that it is allowed to work as he pleases on Sundays or holy-days. This doctrine

emanates from the spirits of hell, and from the enemies of the Church; not from the Almighty.

II. Besides other striking characteristics of St. Notburga, it is well deserving of remark that she never desired to go to places where persons passed the time in dancing and other dangerous amusements. This time she employed much more usefully in praying and devout reading. A servant, who perhaps neglecting a sermon, or other devotional exercises, spends the time on Sundays and holy-days in walking, especially with those of the other sex, or delights to go to dancing parties, and other questionable places of amusement, puts himself in much greater danger than he is perhaps aware of. They who desire to live piously and to save their souls, should guard themselves against it. One does not return more pious from such amusements. Many, on such occasions, have lost their piety and innocence, have come to grief and shame, have made themselves hateful to God and men, and have forfeited their temporal and eternal happiness. I have not found, in the lives of the Saints, that youths and maidens, who loved chastity, or that pious Christians in general were frequenters of balls, especially in public houses or other suspicious places. But that they carefully avoided such places, I have read very often. I have also observed that they did not even look at frivolous dancing out of curiosity, fearing that the sight of it would awaken sinful thoughts and desires in them: as unhappily experience shows that such curiosity has led many to great vices against purity. "Dancing," says St. Francis of Sales, "draws many to great sin." The same may truly be said of looking at it. If, therefore, we seek danger, and wantonly expose ourselves to it, is it a wonder that we fall? If

you value your salvation, avoid such dangers, especially on Sundays and holy-days. By dancing, or looking at it, we surely do not keep those days as it is commanded to Christians. St. Charles Borromeo, who was not less zealous for the honor of God than for the salvation of those under his charge, left these memorable words: "To pass the holy-days, which are instituted to meditate upon the mysteries of God and the benefits He bestows on mankind, in drinking, gaming, and

dancing, which tempt to gross sensuality and give the devil great delight, is a vice, a horrible infamy." Understand it well. To dance, especially on Sundays and holy-days, is to prepare a pleasure for the Devil; it tempts man to gross sensuality; it is a vice, a horrible infamy. When we observe how improperly dancing is practiced in the public houses, I may well ask: Is St. Charles right, or is he wrong in what he says about dancing?

TWENTY-SIXTH DAY OF SEPTEMBER.

ST. CYPRIAN AND ST. JUSTINA, MARTYRS.

The native place of St. Justina was Antioch. Her parents were pagans, and hence, educated their daughter in the blindness of idolatry. As Justina had been gifted by the Almighty with great intellect, she early in life recognized the nothingness of idolatry and was easily moved to embrace Christianity. No sooner had she been converted, than she rested not until her parents had also joined the faithful. Her desire to serve God most perfectly in the Christian faith incited her zealously to practise all virtues. Especially did she esteem virginal purity, and she consecrated herself to the Almighty by a solemn vow.

In the city where she lived, resided also a noble youth named Aglaides, who, admiring Justina, desired to make her his wife. Justina told him, without any hesitation, that he must give up all thought of her, not only because she was a Christian and he a heathen, but also because she had already consecrated her virginity to a much nobler spouse. The youth who was not so easily to be refused, sent her one letter after another, seeking thus to win her affections. The chaste virgin accepted neither letters nor presents, but repeated her words, adding that she never would change. As he could not gain admittance into her house, he watched for her when she went to Church. One day, meeting her all alone in a narrow street, he hastened towards her. Justina, horrified at his impertinence, defended herself with a strength which is only possessed by the virtuous when sustained by the Most High. In her terror

she called loudly for help, and raising her eyes, thus prayed to the divine Mother: "O Virgin, come to the assistance of a virgin!" The neighboring people who had heard her repeated cries, came running towards her, and driving the youth away, rescued the innocent maiden. When Justina arrived in Church, she gave most fervent thanks to God and the Virgin Mother, for the assistance they had vouchsafed to her.

The unchaste youth, however, had still no peace. Blinded and hardened, he went, by the instigation of Satan, to a magician, named Cyprian, who, at that period, had great celebrity. Telling him that he wanted to marry Justina, he requested him to force her by his art to consent, and promised him a large sum of money should he succeed. The magician promised everything, and conjuring the devil, commanded him to torment Justina until she accepted the offer of Aglaides. The Almighty permitted the chaste virgin to be tormented by the Evil One day and night, with the most abominable thoughts. But taking refuge in prayer, she signed herself often with the holy cross, determined in her heart to conquer all temptations, often renewing her vow and repeating with great trust the words: "O Virgin, come to the assistance of a virgin!" In a word, she fought so bravely, that the devil could gain no power over her. Aglaides going to the magician, complained of the ill success of his art. Conjuring Satan, Cyprian sent more evil spirits to trouble her with their temptations; but they had no better success than the former. Cyprian, full of astonishment, asked the devils whence it happened that they could not become masters of so weak a being. One of them, evidently forced by God, said: "She is a Christian and calls continually on her God, and uses against us the sign of the Cross. Therefore we can have no power over her." Cyprian wisely responded: "This proves clearly, that the God of Justina is more mighty than you all together. Hence I have acted very foolishly in serving you; and now I renounce you, and in future, will give my service to the God of Justina." How great a change worked by the hand of the Almighty! Cyprian endeavored to execute his resolution without loss of time.

He was acquainted with Eusebius, a holy priest, who had often exhorted him to forsake his magic, and seek Christ. To him Cyprian repaired, and having acquainted him with all that had happened, he earnestly asked him whether the God of the Christians would receive a magician among His servants and if He could and would forgive his misdeeds. Eusebius assured him that the Almighty would not withhold His pardon; and having explained to him the immeasurable mercy of God, who promises to all sinners doing penance, grace and pardon, he went

with him to the bishop, who might give him still better instructions on the subject. Cyprian acquainted him with his desire to do penance and become a Christian, and as a sign that he was in earnest he brought all his magical books and burned them in presence of the bishop. Anthimus, the bishop, was rejoiced at the conversion of so great a sinner, and treating Cyprian most kindly, instructed him in the Christian faith, and baptized him. Justina's heart also was filled with inexpressible consolation, when she heard Cyprian's history, and giving thanks to the Almighty for having turned his wicked plans into good, she prayed that he might remain constant in the true faith. There yet remained Aglaides to be won. But by the mercy of God towards the greatest sinners, he was also converted, gave all his possessions to the poor Christians, and having become one of their number, led, henceforth, a pious and penitential life. Cyprian showed himself, after his conversation, not only anxious for his own salvation, but endeavored also to bring others to Christ. He and Aglaides gave humble thanks to St. Justina, as she had been the means by which they had been converted; for all three would have gone to destruction, had she not bravely resisted the evil temptations to which they exposed her.

Eutholius, the governor of Phœnicia, hearing what had taken place in regard to the magician Cyprian, who had been greatly celebrated and much beloved by the pagans, reported the whole proceedings to the Emperor Dioclesian, and in return received the order to leave nothing undone to bring Cyprian back to paganism. He then called the latter and Justina into his presence, and endeavored to persuade them to renounce Christ. Both, however, expounded the truth of the Christian faith so clearly to him, that he was deeply astounded. But as he desired not to appear too much in favor of the Christians, he commanded both to be buffeted and scourged, and then thrown into a dungeon, thinking that this would be enough to bring them back to idolatry. On perceiving that both remained immovable in their faith, he had them thrown into a large cauldron, filled with boiling tar and wax. The holy martyrs, remaining unharmed, praised God with a loud voice. A magician, who had been a disciple of Cyprian, said that this was only a proof of the power of that art which Cyprian had formerly practised, and offered to prove it still more clearly by exposing himself to the same test. When his offer had been accepted, he made some ridiculous signs, muttered some conjurations, and went towards the cauldron standing over the fire; but he was immediately seized by the flames and burned to ashes. This event increased the wonder at the miracle wrought on the holy martyrs. The

Governor, who knew not what to do, sent them both to Nicomedia, where the emperor Dioclesian resided, who immediately ordered them to be decapitated. For six days and nights, the holy bodies remained in the open air, as the tyrant had commanded that they should be left a prey to wild beasts. But none of these touched them; and some Christians at last took them away by night, and having placed them on board a ship, they brought them to Rome, where they are still honored in our days.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Oh! that all who desire to live chastely in their station, would learn of St. Justina, how they ought to conduct themselves when they are tempted to sin by Satan or by wicked persons. To receive letters or presents; to have long, intimate and especially secret conversations with dangerous companions; to allow themselves to be caressed, is the sure way to great vices. "A holy love," writes St. Jerome, "has nothing to do with presents, flattering letters and caresses; for, all such things savor of the flesh and are far from a chaste love." And again he says: "Immodest flatteries, jesting, laughing and caresses, are the beginning, and a certain sign of the approach of the death of purity." Whoever detests sins against purity, let him guard against such a beginning; otherwise he is lost. When you are assailed by force, imitate the chaste Justina. Flee, if you can; but if this is not possible, resist courageously; above all things, use your voice. Call as loudly as you can to God and men for help. In this manner you will surely conquer any wicked person who would entice you to sin. If hell persecutes you with its temptations, let St. Justina be your model. Be not discouraged; the devil cannot force you, even should he call all his hellish companions to aid him. Prayer, the sign of the holy cross, calling to God and the Blessed Virgin, fast-

ing, repeated resolutions not to be conquered, are such invincible weapons, that all hell cannot overcome him who makes use of them. Those who do not make use of them can blame themselves alone when they fall and go to perdition.

II. Cyprian and Aglaides were converted and became Saints, because Justina had so valiantly opposed their wicked schemes. Cyprian, to manifest how earnest he was in his conversion, cast his books and other instruments of his magic art from him. Both gave thanks to Justina for defending herself so bravely, as it opened their eyes to see the brink of the precipice upon which they stood. All three rejoice now eternally in heaven. It is a great miracle of divine mercy, when a magician or an unchaste person reforms; and this miracle God performed on Cyprian and Aglaides. He is ready to work it on others also, who are addicted to vice, if they are only desirous to be converted. To be earnest, and to take due care not to offend again against purity, it is necessary that nothing be kept back which has reference to the vice of unchastity, as dangerous books, immodest pictures and other objects which incite to unchastity. One must shun all the occasions of sin, and break off all sinful acquaintances. If Justina had shown herself weak when tempted to sin, she

would not have converted Cyprian and Aglaides. If she had consented and died with them in sin, she would now be with them in hell. There they would now curse and execrate each other. Learn from this, how much good we may do by resisting sin, and how much evil by being weak. Those who would

tempt you to sin, will one day thank you if you resist them fearlessly; but they will curse and execrate you for consenting to their wickedness. Battle, therefore, bravely against the evil spirit, and all others who assail you. "Even unto death fight for justice." (Eccles. iv.)

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY OF SEPTEMBER.

STS. COSMAS AND DAMIAN, MARTYRS; ST. ELZEAR, COUNT AND CONFESSOR.

Sts. Cosmas and Damian were brothers, born of rich Christian parents, at Ægæ in Cilicia. Both studied medicine, in order to have an opportunity to gain the Pagans to Christ, and encourage the Christians to virtue as well as to constancy in their faith. God blessed their medical skill to such an extent, that they became celebrated through the whole country for the happy cures which they effected, and pagans, as well as Christians had recourse to them in all dangerous diseases. They asked no fee from their patients, but served them out of love to God. When they visited a patient, they inquired into his ailings, and then cured him by making the sign of the cross over him. They even restored sight to the blind, and made the lame walk. Many heathens, healed in this manner, were converted to the Christian faith, as they not only became convinced of the power of the holy cross, but were also taught by the holy brothers who He was who had died for us on the cross. Hence these two holy physicians were rightly esteemed and honored as apostles by the Christians.

The heathens, however, regarded them as the greatest enemies of their gods: and when the Governor Lysias, by the order of Dioclesian and Maximian, came to Ægæ, to exterminate the Christians there, these two brothers were the first who were denounced as magicians and corrupters of the people. Lysias called them to account, but they said fearlessly: "We are no magicians, no corrupters of the people; but in faith, Christians, and physicians by profession. We are not actuated by selfish motives, by lust of gain, in the practice of our science, as we take remuneration from no one. The happy cures we make we owe

not so much to our knowledge, as to the power of Jesus Christ, whom we worship as the true God." It was enough for the governor to know that both professed Christianity. He ordered them to be bound, whipped, and then thrown into the sea. The first of these orders was immediately most cruelly executed, but with the second he did not succeed; for, an angel of the Lord loosened the fetters of the Martyrs and brought them back to the shore, healed the wounds which they had received in the barbarous whipping. When Lysias was informed of this, he ordered them to be burned alive. They were cast into a burning furnace, but remained unharmed. The tyrant then had them bound to a cross and commanded stones and arrows to be thrown at them; but both stones and arrows rebounded from them without doing them the least injury, while they severely wounded the heathens who were standing around. A great many were converted by this miracle. Lysias alone remained unmoved; and as he knew no other tortures, he condemned the two Saints to die by the sword.



St. Elzear, whose name is also recorded to-day in the Roman Martyrology, was born of a noble and illustrious family. His mother, a matron highly esteemed on account of her virtues, consecrated him to God soon after his birth. She humbly begged the Almighty that if He foresaw that her child would ever offend Him by a mortal sin, He would take it to Himself after it had received baptism. She would much rather lose her child while it was still innocent, than have it live even one moment in sin. We can not doubt that this consecration, made with a sincere heart, was pleasing to the Most High; for He bestowed upon Elzear the grace to preserve his innocence unspotted until his death. Compassion towards the poor seemed to have been born with him, as, from childhood, he allowed no one to leave his door without alms. He searched in the house for everything which he might give to the poor, and divided it among them most kindly. He was educated in the monastery of St. Victor at Marseilles, and was unwearied both in gaining knowledge and in practising all Christian virtues; he was therefore greatly beloved and esteemed by all.

By command of King Charles II., he was, when still very young, united to a princess named Delphine, who was as virtuous as himself. After the marriage ceremony, Delphine informed Elzear that she had been forced to this marriage, but was determined to preserve her virginity, if he would give his permission.

Elzear admired Delphine's virtue, and consented to her pious resolution; and soon after, he also made a vow of perpetual chastity. Thus both lived in celibacy until their end. The means they made use of to persevere in this unusual course were prayer, frequent partaking of the Holy Sacrament, continual mortification of their senses, and a filial devotion to the Blessed Virgin. They thus obtained not only the grace to remain free from all temptations against purity, but were, by their constant companionship, still more animated to esteem chastity.

When St. Elzear had reached his twentieth year, he requested of his grandfather, with whom he had resided, the permission to retire with his spouse to a castle which belonged to her. Here he arranged his household in such a manner, that it resembled a monastery rather than the residence of a Count. For his servants and the other occupants of his house, he wrote the following memorable rules. I. To hear Holy Mass daily. II. To go to confession every week, and once a month to Holy Communion. III. To work diligently. IV. To abstain from blasphemy, cursing, and licentious conversation. V. To lead a pure life. VI. To avoid playing at dice and other games of chance. VII. To maintain peace and harmony among themselves, and after a quarrel, to become reconciled before the day had closed. VIII. To assemble together daily for spiritual reading. These and several similar rules he made for his household, designating, also, certain punishments for the transgressors. And that all might the more easily be led to observe them, he went before them by his own example.

His love for the poor, which, as remarked above, he had already manifested in his most tender years, increased as he grew older. He daily washed the feet of ten poor persons, even lepers, whom he also fed and assisted with alms. One day, he visited a neighboring hospital where he found six lepers, whose appearance alone struck the beholder with horror. Elzear, going up to them, comforted them, and not only made them rich gifts, but also embraced them most tenderly. In consideration of this heroic self-abnegation of the Count, God freed them all from their leprosy. At the time of a great dearth and famine, Elzear emptied all his barns in charity to the poor. Nor was he less generous in the forgiveness of injuries. Once, when business called him away, some of his subjects revolted, and naturally feared that when he returned, they would be punished. But the Count pardoning them, relieved them of their fear, and by this gracious act, quite won their hearts. At another time, however, he was severely just, as he would not leave evil deeds unpunished any more than good deeds unrecompensed. King Robert

requested him to discharge the functions of President of the Council at Naples, until he should return from a voyage to Provence. Elzear accepted the office and had ample opportunity to show his love of justice. No respect of persons, no offer of presents, could turn him from what he considered just and right. Some of his expressions with regard to bribes deserve to be remembered. Some one advised him to accept certain gifts, saying that he could do so with an easy conscience: "It is true," replied the Count; "I might accept these gifts with an easy conscience; but from what we may accept rightfully, we come easily to what we may not accept rightfully. We begin by taking the fruit, then we take the tree, and finally the garden in which the tree grows."

Innocent and holy as was the life of St. Elzear, still God visited him with crosses and persecutions. He was, however, never seen despondent, disturbed or discontented. In his sorrows he fled to the holy wounds of Christ, and to the protection of the divine mother, and always found consolation and strength.

At length when some business had taken him to Paris, he became sick, and although no physician pronounced his illness serious, he called for a priest, made a general confession and received Holy Communion. During his sickness he had the history of the Passion of Christ read to him every day. He asked for the Holy Viaticum when he was still in the possession of all his faculties. When the priest came to the words: "Through thy Cross and Passion; O Lord, deliver us!" the holy man distinctly said: "This is my hope; in this will I die." Before his end he had yet to sustain a severe combat which was perceptible in his countenance. After some time, he exclaimed: "Great is the power of the spirits of hell: but the might and merits of Jesus Christ have annihilated them." Later, he said: "I have conquered; God be praised; I have entirely conquered!" His whole face then became illuminated; a heavenly brightness seemed to emanate from it, until his pure, virtuous soul was in the presence of his Creator. His death took place in 1323.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. Cosmas and Damian showed great love to the sick, but desired no recompense, because they did it all out of love to God. To labor and to suffer for the love of God is the best intention, and one we should endeavor to cultivate. It is a good and</p>	<p>holy intention, when I do or suffer anything to escape hell, but it is a still better one when I do or suffer anything to gain salvation. It is known that even great saints have made use of such intentions. The noblest and most excellent intention,</p>
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however, is to do and suffer for the pure love of God only. Make this intention early in the morning, when you say your prayers, and renew it often during the day. Turn your thoughts frequently to the Almighty and say: "Lord, out of love to Thee! to Thy honor!" Especially ought you to do this when what you are about to do is tedious; for this intention will lighten it. Sick persons, who cannot pray much, ought to accustom themselves to repeat these words. Frequently ought they to say or think, while looking up to heaven or to the crucifix: "Lord, I bear this suffering from love to Thee! All out of love to Thee, O my God!" This will bring them consolation and prove very meritorious. I say very meritorious, yes, even in the highest degree. It will obtain great recompense in heaven; for, St. Chrysostom assures us: "Let us not believe that we shall have no reward when we endeavor to obtain none; for, our recompense will be so much sweeter in heaven."

II. St. Elzear was of noble birth, and rich in temporal goods, yet he lived not only a Christian, but a holy life. Nobility and riches do not in themselves prevent us from gaining salvation. Virtue and piety may be very well united with nobility of birth and riches. It depends only on our using them rightly, as the holy Count Elzear did. But if they are used otherwise, as for instance, nobility to engender pride, to despise and oppress others; or riches to indulge in immoderate luxury, or other sins and vices; in such cases, both serve to lead men to perdition. St. Elzear showed that they might

be well used to the honor of God and the salvation of souls. On the day of judgment, the life of this saint will confound all those nobles of this world who imagine that they cannot live piously and become holy in their station, as if devotional exercises were not suitable to their rank in life, but good only for common people, for religious in a convent, or for hermits in a desert. How can they justify themselves with the excuses they now make, that their affairs prevented them from praying, or that burdened with so many cares, they could not live piously? St. Elzear also had great cares, and the government of his subjects surely gave him great work to do; yet he found time to serve God; why then should others of the same rank be unable to do the same? They might also learn from the example of the holy Count how to regulate their household in a Christian manner, and how to guide those under them in the path of duty and righteousness. They might further learn how careful they ought to be in regard to accepting presents when they have to administer justice. All Christians will learn from this holy Count not to trust too much to themselves, when they read how severely this saint was tempted on his death-bed. All should learn from him where to seek a refuge in temptation, and how to combat, so that they also may exclaim in their last hour: "I have conquered!" For only to those that conquer has heaven been promised. "To him that shall overcome, I will give to sit with me on my throne," says the Almighty. (Apoc. III.)

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY OF SEPTEMBER.

ST. WENCESLAS, KING AND MARTYR.

St. Wenceslas, duke of Bohemia, was the son of Wratislas and Drahomira. In proportion as his father was a model of all Christian virtues, his mother was the possessor of all vices, besides being a great enemy to the Christian Religion. Wratislas, upon his dying bed, gave Wenceslas in charge of his grandmother Ludmilla, while Boleslas, his younger, was kept by Drahomira. As both women were totally different in their morals, so also the conduct of the two children became entirely unlike. Wenceslas became pious and holy; Boleslas, godless and licentious. Drahomira seized the government of the state and persecuted the Christians most cruelly. She banished the priests, dismissed the Christians from all public places, which she filled with heathens of whom the faithful had nothing to expect but cruelty. The nobles would not submit to this administration, and deposing Drahomira, placed Wenceslas on the throne, and bound themselves to him by an oath of allegiance. Drahomira, burning with rage when she perceived that the Christians were again protected by the pious Ludmilla, was determined to revenge herself. She sent some hired assassins who strangled her with her own veil, while she was at her devotions in her private chapel. Not satisfied with this murder, Drahomira sought to make away with her son Wenceslas.

Meanwhile, this holy Prince conducted himself towards God and his subjects in such a manner, that he was beloved and highly esteemed by every one. He was extremely kind in all his actions, temperate in eating and drinking, unwearied in his care for his subjects, and blameless in his whole conduct. He was so charitable to the poor and to prisoners, so compassionate to widows and orphans, that the Christian world could count but few men like him. The prisoners he visited at night and gave them rich alms, the sick he supplied with all they needed, and showed a fatherly heart to the widows and orphans. It is known that he himself, at night, carried wood upon his shoulders to the destitute. Not a shadow of impurity tarnished the brightness of his life, and he preserved his chastity unpolluted to his end. He gave daily several hours to prayer, and even in winter frequently visited the Church at night barefooted. One of his servants who accompanied him, one day complained of the cold, and the duke told him to step in the footprints which he, walking before him, had made in the snow. The servant did so and no longer felt any cold; for the footprints of the prince were warmed by his

love to the Holy Eucharist. Towards the priests he was always extremely generous. He often served them at the Altar, and allowed not the least wrong to be done them by word or deed. He distinguished himself especially in his devotion to the Holy Mass at which he daily assisted. He sowed, gathered and prepared with his own hands, the wheat which was used in making the Hosts; and cultivated and pressed the grapes for the wine used at Holy Mass. In one word, Wenceslas reigned and lived like a Saint.

Count Radislas, scorning the piety of the duke, caused the people to rebel and marched against Wenceslas. The latter, sending him a deputation, made offers of peace, but Radislas would not even listen to the king's message, esteeming it a sign of Wenceslas's cowardice. Hence the holy duke was forced to meet him at the head of his army. The two armies were drawn up opposite each other in battle array, when Wenceslas, sad that so much innocent blood should be shed, and being willing rather to give his own than that of his subjects, challenged Radislas to single combat, with the condition that the victory should be on the side of him who should slay his adversary. Radislas accepted the challenge, and spear in hand, galloped in full armor towards the Saint. The latter was also clad in armor, but carried only a sword. Radislas intended to unhorse Wenceslas with his spear and thus have him in his power. The Saint went to meet him, making the sign of the cross. At the moment when Radislas was about to thrust his spear, he saw, by the side of Wenceslas, two angels who cried to him: "Stand off!" This cry acted like a thunderbolt upon Radislas, and changed his intentions. Throwing himself from his horse, he fell at the Saint's feet, asking for grace and pardon, promising obedience in future. Wenceslas raised him from the ground and kindly received him again into favor.

Soon after, the duke was summoned to Worms to assist at the general Diet. The emperor and all the princes and dignitaries were already assembled, but Wenceslas had not yet appeared as he was detained by hearing Mass. Thinking that his delay was intentional and caused by pride, they determined to receive him very coldly, and without the honor he had a right to expect. But when the Saint entered the hall, Otho, the emperor, saw two angels accompanying him, carrying before him a golden cross. When the Emperor had recovered from the awe with which this sight had inspired him, he arose from his throne and going towards the Saint, he led him to the seat prepared for him. The entire assemblage were greatly astonished at this act of the emperor, but when he related what he had seen, they all regard-

ed the Saint with the greatest reverence. The emperor also bestowed the royal dignity and power on Wenceslas, and presented him with the arm of the holy martyr, St. Vitus, which Wenceslas received gratefully and with due respect, and took with him to Bohemia. At the close of the Diet, the Saint returned as king, and continued his holy life.

The more the pious monarch was loved and honored by his subjects on account of his holiness and his new dignity, the more hostile Drahomira and Boleslas grew towards him. Wenceslas, who perceived this, determined to resign his crown. But the wicked Drahomira would not wait for this. Boleslas had become father of a son, and Wenceslas was invited to be present at the baptism of the young prince. Although the holy king had reason to suppose that this invitation covered other intentions, he accepted it, in order not to manifest any distrust of his brother. Having gone to confession and Holy Communion, he went fearlessly to the palace of Boleslas. He was received with great honor and magnificently entertained. At midnight, before the banquet was ended, the Saint quietly left the hall, and went, according to his custom, into the Church. Drahomira seized this opportunity, and calling Boleslas aside, told him that the hour was now come when he could revenge himself and make the royal crown his own. The blood-thirsty tyrant needed no persuasion. Seizing his sword, he hastened, with some attendants, into the Church and stabbed his holy brother with such brutal force, that the blood bespattered the wall, where it is yet to be seen at this day. But the punishment of God soon overtook the murderers. The earth opened and swallowed Drahomira, the instigator of the sinful deed, with her horse and carriage, in that part of Prague which is called the castle of Ratschin. Of the murderers who were with Boleslas when he committed the crime, some lost their reason, while the rest died by their own hands. Although God delayed the punishment of Boleslas, it came at last. Having long been tormented by most painful maladies, at length he expired in all his wickedness.

The shrine of the holy king Wenceslas was honored with many miracles, after God had crowned his virtuous soul with everlasting glory in the kingdom of Heaven.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. Of the many great virtues of St. Wenceslas, which I have represented to you, I particularly desire that you should take to heart his devotion to the holy sacrifice of the</p>	<p>Mass, and his reverence for the servants of God, the priests. Not every one can imitate him in raising the wheat and wine for the use of the holy sacrifice; but every one can</p>
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imitate him in the devotion with which he daily assisted at holy Mass, a devotion which we cannot sufficiently admire, when we think of the many important affairs which he, as duke and king, had to transact in governing his state. What have you to say to this who are not so burdened with business as he was, and who yet pretend that you have not time? If your regard for holy Mass were as great as that of St. Wenceslas, you would most assuredly not speak thus. Consider what holy faith teaches you of it, and you will esteem it more highly, and not so easily allow a day to pass without attending Mass. Fear not that by it you will suffer loss or neglect your business. Time thus given to the Almighty will be an advantage to you, and bless your affairs. Determine therefore to assist at Mass daily, or at least as often as you can, but resolve at the same time that this shall be done with due reverence, as it was done by the holy king. Far be it from you to talk, to look curiously about, to be irreverent in your manner, or to do anything that is displeasing in the eyes of God. Appear before God as a beggar should appear before the Lord of heaven and earth, a poor sinner before his mighty Judge, a miserable worm before the Creator of all that exists. For, the Church is in truth the house of God and the gate of heaven.

II. In the respect which the holy king manifested towards the priests, I wish that you would follow his example. Priests are the ambassadors of God on earth; they are the deputies of Christ to teach us the word and will of the Almighty. From them we have to seek pardon for

our sins, according to the institution of the Saviour. Are not these sufficient reasons to honor them? Whoever refuses due honor to the ambassador of a monarch, refuses it to the monarch himself, and the wrong done to the former is received by the latter as if it had been done to himself. Do you not think it will be the same with honor or dishonor done to the priests? Endeavor, therefore, to give them due respect and honor. Be not one of those who speak abusively and irreverently about priests and their actions, who make their faults known everywhere, or even charge them with vices of which they are innocent. Should a priest have done wrong, it is not for you to despise him as an ambassador of God. Many ambassadors of temporal powers have their faults, but we dare not insult them, because they are royal ambassadors. Priests are ambassadors of the Most High, and on account of this high dignity, you owe them especial honor. If those who speak so disrespectfully of priests would consider their own great faults, they would surely come to the conclusion that they have no reason to slander the anointed of the Lord. "They are like those hypocrites," says St. Gregory, "who carry a large beam in their own eyes without seeing it, but who notice a splinter in the eyes of others." Pay attention to the further remarks of the same holy Father: "If it is a just law that those shall be severely punished, who, by offending a royal ambassador, have become guilty of offending the majesty of a king, how will those fare who have despised the Divine Majesty in His priest?"

TWENTY-NINTH DAY OF SEPTEMBER.

THE FEAST OF THE DEDICATION OF THE ARCHANGEL ST. MICHAEL.

To-day's festival is called in the breviary of the Church, the Dedication of the Holy Archangel St. Michael. To understand this, it is necessary to know an event which took place at the time of Pope Gelasius I. in the latter part of the fifth Century. In Apulia, there is a mountain formerly called Gargano, now Monte St. Angelo, or Angel's mountain. Near this mountain, a herdsman was keeping his cattle. A steer strayed away from his herd and went into the woods on the mountain, to the entrance of a cave which was concealed by bushes. The herdsman, to drive the animal out of the cave back to the herd, shot an arrow at it. The arrow, however, turned and flew with great force back to him. The herdsman and those who were present were terrified at this and none dared to go nearer to the cave. They went to the bishop, who was at Siponto, a neighboring city, and informed him of what had occurred. The bishop, not doubting that a divine mystery was concealed under it, ordered his congregation to fast and pray three days, in order that God might graciously reveal it to them. At the expiration of the three days, St. Michael, the Archangel, appeared to the bishop and announced to him that the place whither the steer had fled was under his especial protection, and that he desired that they should dedicate the spot to the honor of God, and to the memory of St. Michael and all the Angels.

The bishop, greatly rejoiced, called the clergy and the people together, and having informed them of the revelation, formed a large procession and ascended the mountain. They found a large cave which was like a Church hewn out of the rock. Above the entrance was an opening by which the whole interior received light. To offer the holy sacrifice of the Mass in it, only the altar was wanting; but it was speedily erected by the pious bishop. The Church itself was soon after dedicated with great solemnity to St. Michael and all holy Angels. The fame of this event spread in a short time all around and drew a great many pilgrims to the Church, while the many miracles that took place there, were a visible sign that the veneration and invocation of St. Michael and the other holy angels must be very agreeable to the Most High. To-day's festival was instituted to commemorate the dedication of the Church on Mount Gargano, hence it is called the dedication of St. Michael, as he is especially venerated in that Church. The commemoration of the apparition of this

holy Archangel on Mount Gargano is celebrated on May 8th. Besides this, other apparitions of St. Michael are recorded, which gave occasion, at different times, to the erection of splendid Churches in his honor, at Constantinople, at Rome and in France, as is to be read in the history of the Church. Experience has taught that this considerably increased the veneration of this great prince of heaven, and in truth we have most important reasons to show him especial honor ; for, he is the head, or, as the Church expresses it, the prince of the heavenly legions. He is the first of those happy spirits who are continually in the presence of God, standing before His throne. It was he who, at the first moment of his existence, turned to the Almighty and submitted to Him in perfect obedience. It was he, who, so to say, first took up arms against the proud Lucifer, who would not be subject, but equal to the Most High. His humility, obedience and zeal for the honor of God raised him above all in heaven ; as pride, disobedience and perfidy abased the proud Lucifer and precipitated him into hell. St. Michael has been chosen by the Almighty as the protector of the Church of Christ, as in the old Covenant he was the protector of the Synagogue. He was, in olden times, solicitous for the welfare of the true believers in the Synagogue, as is evident from the words spoken by the holy Archangel, St. Gabriel, to the prophet Daniel : " Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me " (Daniel, x.). The angel, under whose protection the Persians were placed, desired that the Israelites should remain longer in Persia, as many Persians came to the knowledge of the true God by associating with the chosen people. The holy Archangel Gabriel, however, desired that the Israelites should be released out of Persia, because he feared that too great intimacy with the Persians might induce them to become faithless to the true God. St. Michael united his prayers with those of St. Gabriel, and thus evinced his care for the true believers. Not less watchful is he now for the faithful of the New Testament and for the entire Church. He comes to help her, prays for her and protects her against her enemies. At the end of the world, he will manifest his protection of her, especially against the Antichrist, the greatest enemy of the Christians, as St. Gabriel revealed to the holy prophet Daniel, saying : " But at that time, Michael shall rise up, the great prince, who standeth for the children of thy people " (Daniel, xii.). This holy Archangel is also appointed to bring the souls of men to the throne of the Most High, that they may receive their judgment ; and that their sentence may be favorable, he strongly assists them in the last combat, which, at the end of their days, they have usually to fight

with the Evil one. The devil, at that moment, uses all his powers to overcome man and make him unhappy for all eternity. St. Michael, appointed by God to assist and to strengthen our souls in this dangerous combat, helps us to conquer. Hence the holy Church addresses him in the name of all the faithful in the prayers for the dying, as follows: "Holy Archangel Michael, protect us in our fight, that we may not go to perdition on the day of Judgment." She teaches us also to invoke this holy Archangel before all other heavenly spirits, in the litany of all Saints. But if we desire to secure his intercession, and enjoy his assistance in our last combat, it is necessary that we endeavor to imitate his example and fight bravely against the evil spirit, whom, at the end of our lives, we desire to conquer with St. Michael's assistance. Among different representations of St. Michael there is one in which he has a shield in his hand, upon which are the words: "Who is like unto God?" The word "Michael" means in Hebrew, "Who is like God?" St. Michael used this as a weapon, so to say, against the proud Lucifer who desired to be equal to the Lord. "Who is like God?" "Who is equal to God?" With these words, he conquered and precipitated Lucifer and his followers into hell. The same weapons, the same shield we also should use in all temptations. "Who is like God?" "Who is so mighty, so wise, so beautiful, so amiable as God." "Who is so much to be feared as God?" "Who can recompense my service as God?" "Who can do so much good or so much harm to me as God?" "Whom have I reason to serve and obey as God?" "Whose grace have I to seek more than the grace of God?" "Whose disfavor have I to fear more than the disfavor of God?" "Whoever uses these and other wholesome thoughts as spiritual weapons against the spirit of hell, fights after the example of St. Michael, and will always conquer Satan. And those who accustom themselves now to combat thus, have reason to hope that they will vanquish Satan in the last fight, and that the holy Archangel will surely assist them at that important moment. In conclusion, I will add the beautiful words of St. Lawrence Justinian, by which he admonishes all Christians to venerate the holy Archangel. "It is our duty," says he, "to give honor to the prince of the heavenly legions. We ought to praise him especially on account of the elevated state of grace in which he is; and because God has distinguished him by bestowing so high a dignity upon him; for his invincible strength, for the Almighty's favor to him and his heroic constancy in combats; but in all these, we must honor him only in God, who has created him and us, He is very powerful with the Most High. The glorious victory is well known to us, which he won in heaven, soon after the

Creation, over the rebellious angels. Not without reason does our Mother, the holy Church, endeavor to honor him especially, because she knows that the divine Majesty has given him to her as protector, mediator and receiver of all elect souls. Hence all should recognize St. Michael as their protector, and duly praising him, honor him with devout prayers, commend their cares to him and rejoice him by reforming their lives, as his love is so great, that he cannot refuse our prayers, nor reject our confidence, nor disregard our love; as he protects the humble, loves the chaste, guides the innocent, guards the pious in this temporal life, and leads them to their heavenly home."

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Michael remained true to God when thousands of other angels became faithless to Him. He followed not their example. You also should not follow the bad example of others, but fulfil God's commandments. Remain faithful to the Lord though thousands of others leave Him. St. Michael was zealous in honoring God and opposed those who would not be obedient to the Creator. You can also do this. When others speak against the true faith in your presence, against the ceremonies and commandments of the true Church, against purity, against the honor of your neighbor; when you see that they transgress the laws of God and of the Church, you should defend the honor of the Almighty and prevent all the evil you can. If you are so situated that you cannot say or do much, show, by your silence, by your seriousness, that you are displeased by such offences against the Majesty of the Most High. St. Michael fought valiantly against Lucifer and his adherents. Therefore God placed him above all the heavenly spirits. Lucifer, with his adherents, endeavors to induce you to leave God, to become faithless to Him. Fight bravely against him

and you, too, will be exalted. Say to him: "Who is like God? Who is so kind, so mighty, so amiable as God?" And that you may fight vigorously, as well in life as in death, call often and fervently on St. Michael: "Help us here to fight and to conquer the enemy, O St. Michael!"

II. St. Michael is exalted for his fidelity and for defending the honor of the Almighty. But what was the fate of Lucifer and his adherents? They were precipitated into hell, which God had created for the rebels, and for all those who would follow them in disobedience. Behold, this is the end of those who are disobedient to the Creator, and offend Him. Consider this point carefully. Lucifer and almost numberless heavenly spirits have been cast into everlasting fire on account of sin, of only one and the first sin. God spared not one of so many noble spirits, nor gave them one single moment to repent; but cast them all immediately into hell. A single sin is punished with eternal damnation, and this a sin only in thought. Do you then at last comprehend how great the wickedness of one single sin must be? Can you still flatter yourself that

thoughts are free, or that you cannot commit great sin with them? Can you still believe those who say to you that God does not much regard sins; that He pardons them very easily? Truly you must either say that God is unjust, or that the wickedness of sin is very great. The first you dare not say, because it would be blasphemy; hence you say the second: the just God punishes a single sin with hell; but He punishes it not more severely than it deserves. Thus, a single mortal sin deserves to be punished during all eternity in hell; hence the wickedness of a mortal sin must be exceedingly great. What have you to object to it? Certainly if the example of Lucifer and

the just punishment which God made him and his adherents suffer, have not opened your eyes to recognize the wickedness of sin, and if this is not sufficient to induce you to avoid all sin, you are lost. Consider further, the words of St. Peter, who said, that God, by chastising the sinful angels, shows all sinners how He will punish them. If God did not spare such noble spirits, how can you imagine that He will spare you? Make then this day, the resolution to fear sin, to fear it more than all the evils on earth, more even than hell itself; for, it is truly a greater evil than hell itself. "Many consider hell the greatest evil," says St. Chrysostom; "I think that sin is a greater evil."

THIRTIETH DAY OF SEPTEMBER.

ST. JEROME, CONFESSOR AND DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH.

St. Jerome, the great doctor of the church, was born at Stridonium, in Dalmatia, during the reign of the Emperor Constantine. Not less celebrated for his holy life than for his eminent knowledge and the great learning with which he expounded Holy Writ, St. Jerome was also a most heroic and victorious combatant of heresy, and an unwearied defender of the truth of the Catholic faith. He received his first instructions in science at Rome. An insatiable desire thoroughly to study all branches of knowledge led him to different lands to become a disciple of the most famous teachers. Hence, he made such progress in science, that the most learned men, even the Popes themselves, asked his advice in various matters, especially when they experienced difficulty in expounding Holy Writ. Having returned from Greece, whither he had gone in search of knowledge, he went to Syria, partly to study still more, partly to visit the holy places. Meeting a great many monks there, he became acquainted with the holy life they led, and resolved to leave the world also and live in solitude in order to serve God more faithfully and be undisturbed in the reading of learned and pious works. Four years he remained there in deep solitude and great piety. His only garments were made of sack-cloth; his bed was the bare ground, and his pillow, a stone. His fasting was so severe that, according to his own words, his whole body was emaciated,

and his bones were covered only with skin. God permitted him, notwithstanding these austerities, to be for some time most fearfully tormented by terrible temptations. All that he had seen at Rome, in the theatres and other places, came before his eyes. Casting himself before the crucifix, he bathed the feet of Christ with bitter tears, took not the least nourishment for several days, beat his breast with stones, and left not off praying until heaven had restored peace and calm to his heart. To continue in this state of mind, he tried to occupy himself with other thoughts and to shun idleness, that the evil one might find no opportunity to tempt him further. He read Holy Writ with the greatest attention, and to understand it better, he learned Hebrew, which, as he confessed himself, he found exceedingly difficult. After four years he went to Jerusalem to revisit the holy places, and to learn Hebrew more perfectly. Satan endeavored to disgust him with Holy Writ, pretending that the style was not so finished as that of Cicero, the pagan writer, whom he esteemed most highly, and often read with great attention. But God punished him severely for this. He relates himself that once, during a heavy sickness, it seemed to him that he stood before the judgment-seat of Christ. He was asked: "Who art thou?" "I am," answered he, "a Christian." "Thou liest," said the judge severely, "thou art a Ciceronian and no Christian; for where your treasure is, there also is your heart." Soon after this the judge ordered him to be scourged. During this punishment, Jerome cried: "O Lord, have pity on me, have pity on me!" The scourging ceased, but the marks on the body of the saint were a sign that the vision had been more than a dream. Jerome concluded from this that he had done wrong in spending so much time in reading a heathen orator. He laid all worldly books aside and once more began to study Holy Writ most diligently. He also translated many books of the Holy Scriptures from the Hebrew into Latin, and corrected others according to the Greek version, and added to all most learned commentaries.

At the age of thirty years he was ordained priest by Paulinus, Bishop of Antioch, but would never consent to charge himself with a parish, because he desired to give all his time to the expounding of the Holy Scriptures. During the reign of the holy Pope Damasus, Jerome went with several bishops to Rome, where the Pope employed him in some very important affairs. At the request of the holy Father, he instructed several of the nobility, whom he led to great holiness. The most known among them were St. Paula and her daughter Paulina, St. Marcella, Eustochium, Ruffina, Blessilla, Albina, Ascella, and Læta. He also preached frequently at Rome, and censured, with Christian

liberty, the vices and abuses of the Romans. But his teaching those above mentioned, as well as his sermons, caused him much suffering, especially after the death of St. Damasus. Although the holy man defended his honor, which was severely attacked by some wicked people, he nevertheless, in order not to be disturbed in his work on the gospel, returned to Palestine, taking some persons with him who had determined to make their dwelling there. The holy widow, Paula, also left Rome, and went with some other women to the Holy Land, and built at Bethlehem, near the manger of the Saviour, a monastery, in which the Saint led a religious life with those who submitted themselves to his rule. This was the origin of the celebrated religious order which still bears the name of St. Jerome. The Saint himself gave his brethren the brightest example in all virtues; but besides this, he labored zealously for the welfare of the Catholic Church. At that time several new heretics attacked the Catholic faith with great fury; among these were Vigilantius, Helvidius, Pelagius and Jovinianus. St. Jerome opposed all, refuted their heresies, and defended the Catholic faith by many written works. No enemy of the church came forth whom this holy man did not immediately challenge and defeat; hence, he is rightly called the hammer of the heretics, and the protector of the Catholic truth. No danger, no threats of the heretics, no persecution, not even death itself could deter him. "The dog barks to protect his master," said he, "and shall I not speak to defend my God? I can die, but I cannot be silent." All heretics feared him; but all true Catholics loved and honored him, not only in Palestine, but in every part of the Christian world. Many travelled from distant lands to Bethlehem to see so renowned a man. Although St. Jerome was so great in the eyes of the world, he was too deeply humble not to avoid all vain glory. He says in a letter, that from childhood he had shunned nothing more than pride and haughtiness, as they draw down the hatred of God. He had, according to his own words, constantly before his eyes the verse: "Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart." In explaining the gospel, he never followed his own judgment alone, but first prayed fervently to God to enlighten him, and then asked the opinion of other learned men. To remain humble he frequently remembered his sins, as he himself confessed, and exclaimed with the Psalmist, on bended knees, and while shedding bitter tears: "O, Lord! remember not the sins of my youth and my ignorance." Although he led so austere and holy a life, yet his dread of the last judgment and of hell was extremely great. His fear of the former he explains in these words: "As often as I think of that terrible day my whole body trembles.

I may be eating or drinking, or otherwise employed, but I seem always to hear the terrible sound of the trumpet of the last day: "Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment!" and again: "Neither fame nor honor can disturb me, because the fear of the terrible judgment of God is constantly upon me." In regard to his fear of hell, he confessed that the principal reason for which he had concealed himself in a dark cave, fasted so strictly, and practised other penances, was his fear of hell. "For fear of hell," he writes, "I have condemned myself to such a dungeon." This double fear kept the holy man, so celebrated in the whole Christian world, humble, and led him in the sure way to heaven.

St. Jerome reached a very great age, although his body was so weakened by his many labors, that long before his death he was unable to rise, or even to turn from one side to the other. But even then he still instructed others, and, not being able to write with his own hand, he dictated several books in defense of the Catholic faith. When, at last, a fever was added to his weakness, he knew that his death was approaching, and prepared himself for his last hour by devoutly receiving the holy sacraments. He manifested great joy in contemplating the eternal happiness to which he hourly came nearer. Those with him, especially his spiritual children, he exhorted, with great zeal, to love God and their neighbor, and then calmly gave his soul into the keeping of Him for whose honor he had labored and suffered. His holy body was buried with great solemnities at Bethlehem, not far from the Manger of the Lord; but was afterwards, together with the Holy Manger, transported to Rome. The vestments and the chalice which he used for a long time in saying Mass, are still preserved, and are rightly esteemed as precious relics of so great a Saint. Not less precious to the Church of Christ are the many works which the holy teacher wrote; as they contain, not only the strongest weapons against heretics, but also much useful instructions for true Catholics. God has made the Saint glorious by many miracles. But we may consider it as, perhaps, the greatest of his miracles, that a man who travelled so much, and suffered such persecutions, and who was always of a weakly and sickly constitution, could write so many and such learned works, defeat so many heresies, lead so many souls to God; in a word, how he could do all he did for the benefit of the Church, and of numberless souls! Truly it was the hand of the Lord that worked through him!

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

St. Jerome, while in the wilderness, was often disturbed by the recollection of scenes which he had	beheld at Rome in the theatre. Behold what is the fruit of such amusements. Many have perhaps
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no evil thoughts so long as they are at such places; the Evil One does not tempt us there in order to induce us to continue to frequent them. But the time will come when this false spirit will bring to our mind everything that we heard and saw in these unchaste plays, and thus, perhaps, lead us to commit great sin. If you desire to escape this danger, avoid all that may occasion it. "At holy baptism," says St. Salvianus, "you renounced the devil and all his works. Frivolous plays and unchaste amusements are works of the devil." Hence, if you frequent these, you show that you revoke your first renunciation and that you turn again to Satan. Can you do this without rendering an account of it to God? Much more severe will be your account, if you bring others, perhaps even young children, to such places. Quintilian writes that, at one time, it was not allowed at Rome, that the young should visit the theatre, that they might not learn what it was better for them not to know. So solicitous were the heathens for their children. And how do some Christian parents act? Oh! Parents! Christian parents only in name? How the heathens will bring shame upon you before the judgment-seat of God! How will you justify yourselves? St. Jerome prayed and did penance when he was tempted. He also endeavored to fill his mind with other thoughts. May you also act thus in your hours of temptation. Endeavor to think of something else, and avoid idleness. St. Jerome was scourged because he found great pleasure in reading a book, although he neither learned from it, nor sought in it anything that was impure or sinful. Oh! how will those be scourged, how deep will be the wounds they will have to

bear, who read all kinds of sensational, scandalous, superstitious and heretical books! If you wish to escape such a chastisement, throw away books of that kind. "When you read a good book, God converses with you," says St. Jerome. Hence, when you read a bad book, Satan converses with you.

II. St. Jerome lived many years in great austerity. And why? Fear of the Judgment Day and of hell actuated him; as he unceasingly thought of these. He believed that he would not be able to justify himself before the Divine Judge and not escape hell, without this severity: or it was at least his opinion that such severity was beneficial to man, in order that he might receive a favorable sentence at the divine judgment and escape hell. You avoid fasting and every severity, lead a sensual, comfortable life; and yet expect to acquit yourself well at the day of judgment and to escape hell. Is Jerome, or are you, wrong? I fear you consider not as earnestly as St. Jerome did, the awfulness of the last judgment and of hell. You do not think of it so frequently; hence, you do not endeavor more earnestly to find a gracious Judge, and not be banished into hell. My advice is, that you think oftener and more earnestly of the last day and of hell. I am sure that you will then not omit to do all that is necessary to justify yourself before the Judgment-seat of God. "Consider frequently and earnestly the approaching day of judgment, and the eternal fire of hell," says St. Ambrose. "Those who think, in all their actions, on the day of judgment, will easily be saved," says St. Hilary. Tertullian writes: "The contemplation of hell is the beginning of our salvation. It puts an end to sin and prepares the way for grace and pardon."

FIRST DAY OF OCTOBER.

ST. REMIGIUS, BISHOP OF RHEIMS.

St. Remigius, descended from a noble family of France, was, in his time, one of the most learned and holy prelates of the church. His parents were Æmilius, Lord of Laon, and St. Cilinia. After two sons had been born to them, they remained for a long time without any other issue, and had given up all hope of seeing their family increased. Montanus, a saintly hermit, who one day visited the castle in which they lived, informed them, by divine revelation, that they would receive a son who, chosen by God, was to illumine all France with his piety and virtues. The prophecy of Montanus became true: Remigius was born, and the pious parents, who regarded him as an especial gift of heaven, left nothing undone to give him a most holy education. In this task they found no difficulty, as Remigius was naturally inclined to all that was good, while he detested the very shadow of evil.

Having finished his studies, he went into the desert, in order that, far from all danger, he might more fervently serve God. The holy life he there led, made him so famous, that, on the death of the Archbishop of Rheims, he was unanimously chosen his successor. Although the Saint most earnestly refused the honor, he had to consent, as heaven itself had confirmed the choice by a ray of light with which his head was surrounded in the presence of a multitude of people. The first care of the Saint, when he had entered upon his new functions, was to abolish several abuses which were spreading; to exterminate vice and to foster virtue. He therefore visited every town, village and hamlet of his diocese, and preached almost daily with great zeal and energy. He took the utmost pains to deter his flock from the horrible vice of unchastity, as he believed and publicly maintained that on account of this crime very few grown persons went to heaven. The beautiful example of virtue which he gave in his own life, imparted force to his admonitions, and converted a great many hardened sinners. The gift of miracles, which God had

bestowed upon His faithful servant assisted him greatly in his labors. It is well known that he gave sight to a blind man; cast the devil out of one possessed, extinguished a raging conflagration with the sign of the holy cross, and, after a short prayer, recalled a dead maiden to life. Knowing, by divine revelation, that a famine would come over the land, he gathered a great quantity of corn in a large barn, that he might be able to assist the poor, for whom he always evinced a fatherly care. Some wicked people, thinking that avarice had prompted him to do this, set the barn on fire. When the Archbishop was informed of it, he hastened to extinguish the flames; but on seeing that all endeavor to do so would be useless, he quietly warmed himself by the spreading flames without letting an impatient word pass his lips. "God will not leave unpunished those who thus wickedly destroy the food of the poor," he said with prophetic spirit, when all was over. His words became true; for, all those who had taken part in this wicked deed became deformed; besides this, they lost all the fruit they had in their barns, and their fields became barren.

Many other miraculous events are found in the life of this Saint, of which the most wonderful is the conversion of King Clodovæus or Clovis. Clotildis, the queen, was a Christian, and neglected no occasion to admonish the king to abandon idolatry in which he had been born and educated. But she could not persuade him, until the Germans invaded his dominions, when she again most earnestly spoke to him. As a battle was to be fought, on the issue of which the welfare of the whole kingdom depended, she exhorted him to call on the God of the Christians for aid, and to promise Him to embrace the Christian faith if he should succeed in conquering his enemies. Clovis won the decisive battle, but not without a miracle. Victory seemed for a long time, to be on the side of the enemy, and Clovis thought that all was lost, when he suddenly remembered the admonition of his queen and exclaimed: "God of Clotildis! if thou art the true God, save me, and I will become a Christian and serve Thee faithfully." No sooner had he pronounced these words, than the tide of battle turned in his favor, and the enemy was completely routed. The king, not to delay the fulfilment of his promise, called St. Remigius immediately to be instructed in the Christian faith and was baptized. How gladly the holy bishop performed this holy act! After the king and the chief of the nobility had been perfectly prepared, the day on which we celebrate the nativity of Our Saviour, was appointed on which they should receive holy baptism. When the bishop had already begun the ceremonies, and was about to anoint the catechumens

with chrism, he perceived that the holy oil had not been provided. Some maintain that the chaplain could not pass, with the vessel in which it was kept, through the immense mass of people who were present. Others say that it had been forgotten. Be this as it may, it is quite certain that God permitted it in order to place the virtue of His faithful servant more visibly before the eyes of the world, and to strengthen the king in his promises for the future. When the bishop, raising his eyes towards heaven, silently prayed to God for help, a snow-white dove came flying towards him, holding a little vial in its beak, placed it in the Saint's hand, and then vanished. The king and all present saw this miracle and were deeply moved. The holy bishop found the vial filled with chrism, which exhaled so delicious an odor, that they all exclaimed that it was not a natural but a heavenly fragrance. This little vessel is still preserved at this day. By the aid of Providence, it was saved in the horrors of the Revolution, by a zealous priest. Before St. Remigius baptized the king, he addressed to him these memorable words: "Bow down thy head, O king, and submit to the mild yoke of Christ. Worship what thou hast hitherto burned; and burn what thou hast hitherto worshipped!" The king, ready to do all that was required of him, received holy baptism with wonderful devotion. A great number of the nobility followed him, clad like him in white garments, and manifesting deep reverence while they were baptized. When the ceremony was over, which for splendor had never before been equalled, the Saint admonished all to be constant in the true faith and to lead a Christian life. From that time, the king loved and honored St. Remigius as his own father, and the bishop made use of the royal favor to the honor of the church and the salvation of the inhabitants of the state, of whom he converted many thousands to Christ. He continued in his apostolic zeal as long as he lived. During the last years of his life, he had occasion to increase the glory which awaited him in heaven by exercising patience: he became totally blind. The holy man's conduct under this misfortune was like that of the pious Tobias of old. He submitted to the will of God, and bore, with the greatest equanimity, all the suffering that accompanies blindness. After some time, God restored sight to His servant, as He had done to Tobias, and called him to receive an eternal recompense, by a happy death, in the 96th year of his age, of which 75 had been spent in his episcopal functions. After 506 years, his holy body was found free from decay, and was transported, on the 1st October, with great and solemn ceremonies, to the church of the Abbey, which is named after the Saint. His death took place in the year of our Lord 533.

It is written of this Saint that he regulated his life according to the following three principles: I. Avoid everything that is sinful or forbidden; nay, even abstain from that which, although permitted, is not necessary, but frivolous and tending only to vain amusement. II. Suffer and bear patiently every misfortune that may assail you, of whatever nature it may be. III. Be courageous. Let not the fear of trouble restrain you from what God or the salvation of your soul requires of you. Call on God for aid, and then act. You will find by experience that, with God's help, you can do more than you thought.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Consider well the three rules by which St. Remigius regulated his life. If you wish to gain salvation, regulate yours by the same precepts. Begin now, at the commencement of this month. Avoid everything that is sinful: this above all, is necessary for your salvation. For the love of God, avoid sometimes even those amusements which are permitted, because this will be agreeable to God and beneficial to yourself. Bear with patience the cross God has laid upon you, and if men, permitted by heaven, do you wrong, complain not. This also, is necessary for your salvation; for, it is not suffering alone that leads us to heaven, but suffering patiently. And lastly, if you should experience difficulties, in the service of God, in the fulfilment of His commandments, in avoiding sin, in practising virtue, in suffering adversity and wrong, in uprooting evil habits, or in some other matters pertaining to your salvation; do not despond, be not discouraged or troubled, but act with energy. You will find that, strengthened by Him, nothing is impossible to you. "The Lord is my strength, my refuge and my deliverer," says King David. "My God is my helper, and in Him will I put my trust." (Psalm xvii.) "The

Lord is my strength." (Psalm cxvii.) "Through my God I shall go over a wall." (Psalm xvii.)

II. "Worship what you have hitherto burned, and burn what you have hitherto worshipped!" Thus spoke St. Remigius to King Clovis, as though he wished to say: "You have heretofore, in the blindness of paganism, worshipped idols and despised the Cross of Christ, you have burned it and endeavored to destroy it. Do now the contrary. Burn the idols, honor the holy Cross, and pray to Him who died upon it for us." Every true penitent ought to do the same. He must love what he hated and despised, and hate what he loved. He must seek after that which formerly he could not endure, and avoid and flee that which he formerly sought. For example, he loved and sought sinful pleasure or sinful gain: he must now hate and shun these. He detested all that was burdensome to the flesh, although God or the Church commanded it; now, after his conversion, he must love all this and practice it. "In the same manner," says St. Chrysostom, "must he, who was intemperate in eating and drinking, become temperate; he who was avaricious, must become liberal to the poor; he who seldom

frequented the Church, seldom lent an ear to the word of God, and gave either very little or no time to prayer must appear oftener in church, hear the word of God more frequently, and give more time to prayer." Is your repentance of that kind? Examine your conscience and correct

yourself where you need correction. "As you formerly loved the world, in the same proportion love now the Creator of the world," says St. Augustine.

NOTICE.—This day is the first of the month. Do not forget what I have elsewhere advised you to do.

SECOND DAY OF OCTOBER.

ST. LEODEGAR, BISHOP AND MARTYR; ST. BAVO, CONFESSOR.

St. Leodegar, the holy bishop and martyr, was descended from royal blood and passed his childhood at the French court. Providence, however, so ordered it that he was in early youth given into the charge of the bishop of Poitiers, who was very solicitous to see him progress as well in virtue as in knowledge. At the age of twenty, the bishop ordained him deacon, and soon after made him archdeacon of his Church. He next became Abbot of the monastery of St. Maxentius, where he governed the religious with so much wisdom and holiness, that he was unanimously elected Bishop of Autun. But when King Childeric came to the throne, he banished Ebroin, the martyr of the palace, and called Leodegar to court, as his chief counsellor. The holy bishop was distressed at this change, but thinking he might influence the young king, to the benefit of the Church and the welfare of the people, he repaired to court and entered upon his new functions with the most holy intentions.

For three years everything went well, and all well-disposed persons rejoiced that the Saint led the king with so much wisdom in the path of rectitude. There were, however, many who slandered the holy bishop and aroused the king's suspicion against him. The Saint soon perceived that he should have no further opportunity to do good, and secretly left the court and went into a monastery from which he some time later returned to his see. Meanwhile Ebroin was recalled by Childeric's successor, and believing that Leodegar had been the cause of his banishment, he was determined to revenge himself. Under some pretext, he marched with an army towards Autun, intending to besiege the city. The holy bishop, fearing that his beloved flock might suffer, went to meet Ebroin, accompanied by the whole clergy

bearing crosses and banners. No sooner did Ebroin behold the Saint, than he made him prisoner, and ordered both of his eyes to be put out. The man of God bore this ignominious and cruel suffering with the greatest patience, not even uttering a word against the tyrant. The remembrance of his past offences, small as they were, and the hope of future reward made every pain endurable to him. "I have well deserved my suffering," said he, "because I have sinned. My trials are as nothing compared with the glory, which is therefore prepared for me in heaven." Ebroin, whose vengeance was not yet sated, ordered the Saint to walk barefoot over a path which was covered with sharp stones and pieces of glass. Saint Leodegar did not resist, but walked over it until his feet, wounded and bloody, could carry him no longer, and he sank fainting to the ground. At last, the revengeful and inhuman tyrant ordered his tongue to be cut out and his lips cut off, and confined him in a cloister. This also the holy man bore with heroic fortitude. "I willingly suffer for a short time," said he, "in order to reign and rejoice during a whole eternity."

The Almighty, who had sustained His faithful servant in these barbarous tortures, bestowed especial graces on him in the cloister to which he had been condemned. Among others was that he was able to speak, though deprived of his tongue and lips. This grace the holy man made use of to the honor and praise of God and the salvation of souls. He preached to the people with great zeal, and exhorted them to a Christian life, without ever alluding to the tortures he had so innocently suffered by the command of Ebroin. Meanwhile, the latter, becoming more and more enraged against him, had him taken out of the cloister and beheaded. God, however, proclaimed to the world the innocence and holiness of Leodegar by many miracles, while Ebroin and all who had taken part in the persecution of the Saint, received their well-deserved punishment even in this world. Ebroin was murdered in his sins; the others became possessed by the devil, and were by him horribly tormented.



St. Bavo, whose festival was celebrated yesterday, was born on the boundaries of Brabant. His father was a Count, his mother of royal lineage, and both were very pious. Bavo was led by them in the path that leads to heaven. On arriving at manhood, he was, with the consent of his parents, united to Ageltrude, a daughter of Count Adilion, who was lord over one part of Brabant. Bavo lived several years in Christian love and unity with his spouse, and when she was taken away from him by

death, he was deeply grieved and began to comprehend more than ever the vanity of all that is temporal and the inconstancy of all earthly happiness. From this came his resolution to seek in future only after eternal happiness. Hearing that the holy bishop Amandus preached the word of God with great success in Ghent, which at that period, was still in the blindness of Paganism, he went thither, in order to hear the apostolic man and to ask his advice. After having heard the bishop preach several times, his heart was so deeply moved, that he did not leave the Saint, but accompanied him everywhere. At length, he made known his wish to enter the religious state, and to give his services to the Church at Ghent. The bishop, after convincing himself of the ability and virtue of Bavo, ordained him priest. Bavo then sold the greater part of his property, and spent the money he received for it partly to relieve the poor, and partly to erect a Church, and resolved to serve God, for the future, in voluntary poverty. He mortified his body with watching, fasting and other penances to such an extent that it became necessary to moderate his fervor. To prayer and meditation he devoted all the time he could dispose of.

Some time later, he went into a dense forest, where he took up his abode in a large hollow oak tree, and led a life of extraordinary holiness. Many people from the neighboring places who heard of it, went to visit him; but the Saint, disliking to attract so much attention, left his little dwelling, otherwise so agreeable to him, and sought in another wood, two miles from Ghent, a more quiet abode. The more he endeavored to conceal himself, the more his pious manner of living became known in the surrounding villages, and the great number of those who came to him, bringing him food, or requesting his advice, induced him again to leave his retreat. He returned to St. Amandus at Ghent, and was ordained by him deacon of St. Peter's Church, with which was connected a monastery, filled with fervent religious, under the rule of St. Benedict. In a sequestered portion of this sacred building, a small room was prepared, where St. Bavo passed the remainder of his life, under the direction of the first Abbot of the monastery. When he was admonished to relent somewhat in his excessive severity to himself, he used to reply: "All severity, all suffering, is as nothing when compared with the glory that awaits us in heaven."

He never showed the slightest vexation in crosses or trials, because he believed himself deserving of still more for his past sins. He never complained when he had to suffer innocently, but thanked God for punishing him in this world. Meanwhile, his body became quite emaciated and exhausted by his many

and austere penances, and he desired to be relieved from this temporal life and united with his God. His wish was complied with, and heaven sent him a severe sickness, of which, after having received the last Sacraments, he calmly and peacefully died, in the presence of St. Amandus. His holy body was buried with great solemnity in the Church of St. Peter, now called St. Bavo. The many miracles which took place at the shrine of the Saint, have made him still more famous since his death than he was while living on earth.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Learn from the life of St. Leodegar, that the Almighty does not always recompense on earth the good deeds of His faithful servants, but often lets them suffer innocently until the end of their days. In heaven they receive their reward, and one which never ends. Learn also that God does not always punish the wicked in this world for their evil deeds, but permits them often to live in prosperity and happiness. Some wicked people are induced by this to still greater vice, like the godless Ebroin; but they may also, like him, be suddenly taken away in their sins and precipitated into hell when they least think of it. But should this not take place, they will not escape their well-merited punishment in the next world, if they do not prevent it by penance. Therefore, be not sad, complain and despair not, if you have to suffer in this world. If you still endeavor to serve God fervently, you will surely receive your recompense in heaven. And if you live in sin and are not punished on this earth, do not flatter yourself that you are secure from the punishment of the Almighty. Say not: "I have sinned and what harm hath befallen me? For the Most High is a patient rewarder;" says the Wise Man. (Eccles. v.) "But

do not think that thou shalt escape unpunished, for that thou hast attempted to fight against God, or to offend God," said one of the seven heroic Maccabees to the godless Antiochus. (II. Macc. vii.) God may withhold the punishment you deserve a long time, but He does not therefore let you go free. That you are not punished in this world is the surest sign that eternal punishment awaits you; for, St. Augustine says: "If the godless are not punished here below, it is a sign that they are reserved for eternal punishment; hence," continues he, "if we commit sin and are not punished in this world, we have so much more reason to fear."

II. St. Bavo complained to no one, when he suffered innocently. He believed that his sins deserved still more. He animated himself in his trials by the thought of the great glory which he had reason to expect in heaven. The same lessons we find in the life of St. Leodegar. How do you act in your sufferings? You immediately relate to all with whom you associate, what you have to endure. They all must know what has happened to you, in any way, and how you have been unjustly oppressed and persecuted. But, tell me, in what way does this benefit you? In no way at all; but on the contrary, it

does you harm ; for, you lose the merit you might derive from your sufferings, and perhaps by it you offend the Almighty. If you have your own profit at heart, bear your sufferings silently, and do not complain in future to any one, except perhaps to those who are able to assist you by word or deed. Commend it all to God and leave it in His hands. Think, in the hour of trial and tribulation, of the sins you have committed, for which you deserve much greater suffering ; think also of the glory which awaits you in heaven, if you patiently bear your cross. St. Gregory says : "When we think of the sins we have committed, we can bear patiently every wrong done to us, because we know that we have deserved much more." And again : "If the elect turn the eyes of their mind to contemplate eternal glory, they will see how trifling our suffering is here below, when compared with the unending reward. The most unbearable pain is mitigated by the contemplation of the reward which follows."

THIRD DAY OF OCTOBER.

ST. AMMONIUS, CONFESSOR.

St. Ammonius was born in a hamlet near Alexandria, the capital of Egypt, of indigent, but very pious parents. He became an orphan early ; but the Almighty touched the heart of one of his uncles with compassion, who received Ammonius into his house and educated him in the fear of the Lord. When Ammonius had reached his 22d year, his benefactor desired him to marry a pious and wealthy virgin. Ammonius was greatly startled, as he had determined to live in celibacy ; but his uncle urged him so long that he at length consented, fearing to offend his benefactor. He resolved, however, after the example of so many Saints, to live in perfect continency, hoping that God, who saw into his heart, would give him the grace to persuade his bride to make the same resolution ; and to obtain this, he addressed fervent prayers to the Almighty. His hopes were not deceived ; for, the first time he spoke with his bride alone, after the marriage ceremonies, he discovered to her his intention and represented so emphatically to her the inestimable value of virginal chastity, that she gladly consented to his wish. Ammonius rejoiced greatly and passed the whole night in prayer with her. Both prayed most earnestly to God, the protector of chastity, to give them grace to remain true to their promise : and the Almighty granted their prayer. They lived 22 years together in virginal chastity, and without ever revealing to any one in what manner they lived. After this time, they perceived an inner

desire to serve the Lord still more perfectly in solitude. After having consulted God in prayer, they left their temporal possessions, separated from one another, and went into the desert. Ammonius selected for himself a mountain in the country of Nitria, where he built a little hut in which to pass the remainder of his life. His whole occupation consisted in praying, praising the Almighty, meditating on the divine mysteries, and mortifying his body. He endeavored to copy the life of the ancient hermits whom he had taken as his models. God so ordained that the fame of the holy life of St. Ammonius soon spread through the whole country, to the salvation of many souls, as it drew many to him who desired to be instructed by him to live piously, while others wished to dwell constantly with him and serve God under his guidance. They also brought many sick to him, who hoped to obtain health of the Almighty through his intercession. One day, they brought a child which had become raving mad. When its parents begged him to restore it to health by his prayers, he said: "My prayer is not so mighty before the throne of God, as to work a miracle on your child; but you yourselves can cure it. Return the steer that you stole from the poor widow, and the health of your child will be restored." The parents, greatly surprised that the holy hermit knew, by divine revelation, the theft of which they had been guilty, obeyed him, returned the steer to the widow; and the child was immediately cured of its misery. Many other graces which God had bestowed upon St. Ammonius, and the miracles which were performed by his intercession, I must omit; the following, however, which happened to himself, I cannot pass over in silence. He came, one day, to a river which he had to cross. No boat being there, he determined to wade through the water. But as, in order to do this, he would have been obliged to raise his garments, he was for some time, at a loss what to do, because he was too modest to look at his bare feet; when God sent an Angel, who carried him over the river as a sign of heaven's pleasure at his modesty.

When our Saint had reached his 62d year, the Almighty called him, by a peaceful death, to receive his eternal reward. At the same time, a hermit renowned for his holiness, who lived at a great distance from St. Ammonius, saw a soul ascending to heaven, accompanied by a great many heavenly spirits; and was informed, by divine inspiration, that this was the soul of St. Ammonius, who had, even in the married state, preserved his purity unspotted until his death.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. It is clear from the story of the deranged child, that, very often, sin is the cause of diseases and other temporal misfortunes. As virtue and piety are often accompanied by temporal well-being : so also is sin hurtful to the body as well as to the soul of man. This is shown plainly in Holy Writ, where God threatens sinners with most terrible punishment, as famine, war and pestilence. He also curses the dwellings, vineyards, cellars and barns, cattle and fruit of those who transgress His commandments. (Deut. xxviii.) The many examples related in Holy Writ testify that such threats are fulfilled. The following words of the Holy Ghost are most true : " Sin maketh nations miserable : " (Prov. xiv.) miserable in soul ; miserable in body ; miserable in spiritual matters ; miserable in temporal affairs ; miserable while on earth ; and finally, miserable for all eternity. Hence, you have double reason to hate sin and to avoid it as a source of so much evil. Consider also that the disease of the child ceased, as soon as the sin that caused it was removed. " Diseases are frequently punishments of sin," says St. Basil. If, therefore, sickness or other misfortune assail you, before all things, cleanse your conscience from the sin, on account of which God has visited you with sickness or crosses, and you may hope that the disease or the misfortune will also leave you. Should this, however, not be the case, then you will have at least the merit of your suffering.

II. St. Ammonius exhorts and persuades his bride to preserve her virginity. What say those to this who tempt their betrothed, on the pretence that they are already united before God ! According to the words of the holy Archangel Raphael,

which I have already cited elsewhere, the evil one has power over such people. How can they be happy ? How can they expect God's blessing on their marriage ? St. Ammonius would not even bare his feet on an occasion when it seemed unavoidable. How clear a sign of his angelic modesty and purity ! What do those say of it, who, without any cause, appear immodestly dressed at home, at church, or on other occasions, to the great scandal of their fellow-beings ? How much they will have to account for before the Judgment-seat of the Almighty, in consideration of the evil they have caused ! The warm weather, or the prevailing costume, is the excuse they give for their immodesty. But Christ judges not after the custom, but after His holy law. If such delicate people cannot endure the heat of the weather, how will they bear the fearful heat of the fire of hell ? How dare they say that they cannot stand the hot weather, when hundreds of women, just as tenderly brought up, suffer cheerfully, for the love of God, much greater inconvenience from the warm weather, under the rough garments of the religious life ? St. Ammonius is carried by an Angel over the river, and at last, his soul, after having left the body, is accompanied by many Angels into heaven. Behold how agreeable chaste persons are to the heavenly spirits. To whom are frivolous, immodest, unchaste persons agreeable ? Surely not to the Angels, but to the unclean spirits, the devils. And whither do these carry them ? The unclean spirits which Christ cast out of the two possessed, as is related in the eighth chapter of St. Matthew, requested to be sent into a herd of swine ; and as soon as they had received this permission,

they drove the swine into the sea where they perished, probably to teach us that the devils like to dwell in those men, who, like the swine, wallow in the mire of lust until they are precipitated into hell. "Over those who live like swine, the devil exercises his power," says St. Ambrose. "There is no vice," says St. Bernard, "which makes the world more a prey to Satan than unchastity. It rejoices hell and draws almost all mankind into pun-

ishment." "Unchastity," says Hugo of St. Victor, "spots the soul, soils the body, is unkind to the neighbor, is horrible to God, and despised by Angels; it gives pleasure to the devils only. The heat of it goes down to hell, but the smoke of it goes up to heaven, and cries for vengeance." Is it then possible that man should not despise a vice so horrible, so dangerous and so abhorred by God and His Angels?

FOURTH DAY OF OCTOBER.

St. FRANCIS OF ASSISIUM, FOUNDER OF THE FRIARS MINOR.

St. Francis, the great founder of the order which bears his name, a man endowed with heavenly wisdom and especial gifts, and who, on account of his fervent love to the Almighty, is called the Seraphic, was born at Assisium in Umbria, and in a stable to which, by the advice of an unknown beggar, his mother had been carried to be relieved of the pains she suffered. His father was a wealthy merchant, and he destined Francis to follow the same occupation. Although the child was bright and cheerful, he never associated with evil companions, in order to keep his innocence unspotted. To the poor he was ever extremely compassionate, having made the resolution to dismiss none without alms. One day, when he was overwhelmed with business, a beggar asked for some money to buy bread. Francis, in his hurry, refused it, but no sooner had the man gone, than he remembered his resolution, and running after the beggar, gave him a rich alms and vowed never again to refuse any one who asked him: and this vow he faithfully kept. Hence, when one day he met a poor man in the street, he gave him his new clothes and clothed himself in the rags of the beggar. At another time, while he was taking a ride, a leper came to him begging; Francis dismounted, took a piece of money and gave it to the poor man. When the latter stretched out his hand, deformed and emaciated by the terrible disease, Francis took it into his own and kissed it most tenderly. When he had remounted, he turned to look for the leper, but could nowhere perceive any sign of him; from which he supposed that either an angel or Christ

Himself had appeared in that shape; the thought of which filled his heart with great comfort, and, at the same time, animated him to still greater liberality. After this event, he began to wean his heart more and more from all temporal things, sought solitude and became more fervent in his prayers. He begged the Almighty most earnestly to favor him with the grace to know how he should serve Him henceforth as his Lord and Master. During this prayer, Christ appeared to him, hanging on the cross and covered with wounds. This vision filled the heart of St. Francis with such devotion to our beloved Saviour, that he could never think of His passion, or look upon a crucifix without shedding tears.

After several miraculous events, by which the Almighty gradually manifested to St. Francis His will, it happened that, one day, when he assisted at Mass, he heard in the Gospel the words of Christ: "Do not possess gold or silver, or money in your purse; nor script for your journey, nor two coats, nor shoes, nor a staff." (Matt. x.) At these words, the holy man felt his mind illuminated and his heart stirred with deep emotion. It seemed as if God said to him that this was the rule by which he was henceforth to regulate his life; and immediately giving his money to the poor, he put off his shoes, clothed himself in a rough penitential garment, which he girded about him with a knotted cord, and determined to lead henceforth an apostolic life. Going among the people, he began to exhort them to penance with such force and zeal, that he not only converted many sinners, but also drew several pious men to offer themselves as disciples in his austere manner of living, and as co-operators in his holy work. When the number of these had reached twelve, St. Francis sent them into different villages and hamlets to preach penance after his example. Instead of money, he gave them the verse of the Psalm: "Cast thy care upon the Lord, and He will nourish thee." As greater numbers came daily, who desired to be his disciples, he gave them certain regulations. Pope Innocent III. confirmed these regulations in 1209, at which time St. Francis and his companions most solemnly made their profession of the three vows of religion. This was the beginning of the celebrated Seraphic Order, which, divided into several branches, has worked, and still continues to work so well for the honor of God and the salvation of souls. When the Order had thus been confirmed, the holy founder went with his disciples to Assisium, where he made his dwelling in a small lonely cottage, that stood near the little Church of Portiuncula. At this place, where the Blessed Virgin was especially honored, St. Francis passed much time in prayer and fasting. He lived on alms, and sent his disciples into the surrounding country to exhort the

people to penance and to teach them to lead a Christian life. The Benedictines, to whom the above mentioned church and the ground near it belonged, gave both to St. Francis, that he might build there the first house for his Order.

The greatest care of the Saint was bestowed upon his disciples and spiritual children, whose number daily increased. He endeavored to lead them in the path of virtue, and to make of them useful members, that they might work for the salvation of men; and to effect this more thoroughly, he tried to be an example to them. Penance, which he and others of his order preached, he practised most austere on his own person. He very seldom partook of food that was cooked, and when he did so, he strewed ashes over it, or destroyed its taste with water. Besides the usual forty days' fast, he observed another fast of the same length, after the festival of the three holy Kings. The same he did from the feast of the holy Apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul, until the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin. To these he added another forty days' fast in honor of the holy Archangel St. Michael and all the Angels. At night, he slept, on the bare floor; a stone or a piece of wood served him for a pillow. He scourged himself almost daily to blood, and exercised himself in all possible bodily mortifications. The cause of this rigor towards himself was not only to do penance for his former sins, but also to prevent himself from falling into others, and to keep his purity unspotted. Hence, when the evil spirit tortured him with unclean thoughts, he cast himself into the snow, and remained in it until he was almost frozen.

His humility was not less than his mortification. He would not allow any one to praise him. "Praise no one," said he, "who does not stand securely. No one should be praised, until we see how he ends." And again: "No one is more or less than he is in the eyes of the Almighty." One day, a pious brother of the Order asked the Saint, what he thought of himself. The Saint answered: "I think that there is no greater sinner upon earth than I am." When the brother asked how he could say so with truth, he replied: "If as many mercies had been bestowed upon the most wicked of all men, as have been bestowed upon me, I do not doubt that he would have been more grateful and more pious than I." His humility made him refuse the priesthood, as he deemed himself unworthy of it. He greatly honored the priests, saying: "If I should meet an angel and a priest, I would first kiss the hand of the priest and then duly honor the Angel; because I owe him the greatest veneration who holds the most holy body of Christ in his hands and administers the same to others."

What shall we say of the poverty which the Saint chose and most warmly recommended to his followers? What of his love of God and man? What of his devotion to the passion of Christ, to the divine Mother and the Saints? What of his other virtues, of which the examples are so numerous, that this whole work would hardly suffice to relate them? He refused, after his conversion, to possess anything as his own, and rejoiced when he had to suffer want. During his prayers, he was frequently transported out of himself, by the intensity of his devotion, and could say nothing but, "My God and my all!" Only to name the most High, filled his heart with such burning love that his whole countenance seemed to be on fire. Charity towards men actuated him to nurse the sick most tenderly, to aid the poor to the best of his ability, to comfort the sad, and to be all to all. His wish to convert the infidels and to give his life for Christ's sake, moved him to repair to Syria and Egypt, where he preached fearlessly before the Sultan of Babylon the truths of Christianity, saying that they should kindle a great fire and he would go into it in order to prove the truth of the Christian faith.

His devotion to the Passion of Christ was so great, that God would recompense it with a miracle until then never heard of. When St. Francis, two years before his death, kept, according to his custom, the forty days' fast in honor of St. Michael, on Mount Alverno, he fell into ecstasy on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, and saw that a shining Seraph came down from heaven towards him. The Angel had six wings, and between these appeared the crucified Saviour with His five holy wounds. At the same moment, the Saint perceived in his side and on his hands and feet, bleeding wounds, like those which the Saviour bore. These wounds or Stigmata remained until the death of St. Francis, and although he endeavored to hide them, he could not prevent their being sometimes seen during his life and many times after his death. The Saint suffered great pain in these wounds, which was a source of great joy to him, as he hoped that this would make him more conformable to his Saviour. Two years later, the Saint became mortally sick, and knowing the hour of his death, he requested to be carried into the little Church of Portiuncula, where, after having received the holy Sacraments, he lay down on the ground, and gave up his soul to his Creator. Before he expired, he exhorted his disciples to follow punctually the rules of the Order, blessed them, and among other things said: "Remain always in the fear of God. Happy are those who persevere to the end in the good which they have begun. I am now on my way to the Lord, and will commend you to His favor." He then told them to read to him the passion of Christ

from the Gospel of St. John. After this, he began to recite the 141st Psalm, and when he had reached the words: "Bring my soul out of prison. The just wait for me till thou reward me," he ended his holy life. This took place in the year of our Lord 1226. Long before while bitterly weeping over his sins, he had received the divine assurance that they were forgiven. In the same manner, it had also been revealed to him that he would go to heaven. Although this gave him great consolation, he did not mitigate the severity of his penances, nor cease to repent of his sins, as he said: "If I had only once committed a small sin, I would think it sufficient cause for weeping as long as I live." Many books have been written about the life of this Saint and to relate the many and great miracles which he wrought both whilst he lived on earth and, after his death, by his intercession in heaven.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. "If I had only once committed a small sin, I should have sufficient reason to weep as long as I live." These were the words of St. Francis. Are you of the same mind? You have committed, during your life, many hundreds—nay, thousands of venial sins, and perhaps even intentionally and maliciously. How many tears have they cost you? How often have you repented of them? How great is your solicitude to avoid them in future? You commit them without any hesitation and are not much distressed. You say frequently and with great unconcern: "Oh! it is only a venial sin! One will not be condemned on account of it." Neither St. Francis, nor any other Saint ever spoke thus. It is true, a venial sin is small in comparison with a mortal sin; but in itself, it is, after mortal sin, the greatest evil in the world. We shall not be condemned for venial faults; but by not regarding them we are gradually led into greater sins until we deserve hell. We do not offend God so grievously by a venial as by a mortal sin; but still we offend His

Majesty; and who dares say that any offence of God is small? "To offend the Almighty in the least," says St. Jerome, "ought never to be considered a trifle." "I cannot comprehend," says St. Paulinus, "how any one can regard as a trifle that which offends the Divine Majesty." The least offence done to a king is, on account of his rank, looked upon as very great. With how much more reason should a venial sin be deemed great, as an insult offered to the great Lord of Heaven and earth? By each venial sin God is offended. This ought to be enough to make us understand that venial sin is in itself a much greater evil than we are able to fathom. Pray to the Almighty to make you recognize the greatness of a venial sin, that you may avoid it in future with greater care, and daily repent of those which, until now, you have committed. "Whoever loves God and obeys Him, not as a slave but as a son, will fear to offend Him in the very least," says St. Basil.

II. "Happy are those who persevere until their end in the good

which they have begun." Therefore, St. Francis is to be esteemed happy, as he continued to the end, in his austerity, poverty, and all other virtues. Unhappy are those who begin to live piously, but soon relax in their zeal; for, according to the testimony of Christ, "he is not fit for the kingdom of God, who lays his hand to the plough, but draws it back again." (Luke, ix.) The beginning is of little avail; we must persevere in good until the end of our lives. "Concerning Christians, we regard not so much the beginning as the end," says St. Jerome: "Paul began badly, but ended well. We praise Judas at the beginning; but the end is spoiled by his treachery." "It is not a very great thing to commence to do good," writes St. Augustine,

"but to persevere in it until the end is perfect and brings the crown of everlasting glory." If you desire to be happy during all eternity, make an earnest beginning to live piously, and then persevere with equal zeal, without allowing the example of bad people or evil temptation to divert you from the way you have chosen. "What does it avail," writes St. Bernard, "if we follow Christ, but do not reach Him?" Hence St. Paul says: "Run so, that you may reach the goal." There, O Christian, shall be the end of your course, where Christ has placed it. He was obedient unto death. You may run, but you will not gain the prize, if you persevere not in your course until your death.

FIFTH DAY OF OCTOBER.

ST. PLACIDUS AND HIS COMPANIONS, MARTYRS.

St. Placidus, a religious of the Order of St. Benedict, was born at Rome. Tertullus, his father, was greatly esteemed in the city, not only for his ancient nobility but also for his great wisdom, which raised him to the highest offices of the state. As he was as pious as he was noble, rich and learned, he gave Placidus in charge of St. Benedict, when the child had not yet reached his seventh year. Placidus made such progress in learning and in all Christian virtues, that he served as an example even to the religious, and when further advanced in years, he desired to be admitted among the disciples of St. Benedict. Tertullus not only consented to his son's wish, but also gave the holy Founder several estates, which lay not far from Monte Cassino, that the monastery which he had begun might be completed, and that he might have means to maintain it. Besides this, he gave him an estate in Sicily, consisting of eighteen villages, as he thought that his property could not be better used than in the maintenance of those who served God zealously, and who faithfully educated the young. Some who

lived in the neighborhood of this estate, were displeased at this generous gift, and each of them appropriated as much of the ground as he could to himself. Benedict, informed of this, thought it best to send Placidus to Sicily; for, though he was only twenty-one years of age, he possessed such deeply rooted virtue and was endowed with such abilities, that the holy Founder promised himself the best result from his mission. Fortified with the blessing of the Saint and accompanied by two religious, Placidus commenced his journey. The Almighty favored him with many miracles on the way. He restored two sick persons to health, he gave sight to a blind man, and speech and hearing to the dumb and deaf, and cast out the unclean spirits from the possessed. The fame of these miracles spread quickly, and had reached Sicily before the Saint's arrival. Hence he was received with great honors and had but little difficulty in regaining possession of that portion of the estate which had been usurped by others. Having happily concluded this affair, with the consent of St. Benedict, he selected a suitable spot whereon to build a monastery for the order. He chose a place not far from the harbor of Messina, where he erected a monastery and a chapel. As soon as he had made his dwelling there with his brethren, several came who desired to live under his guidance. He received them, and led them in the path of perfection with so much wisdom and ability, that they all loved and honored him like a father. Not only by words, but also, and more especially, by his example, did he teach those under him. He devoted many hours to prayer, which he seldom performed without tears. During Lent, he partook of bread and water, on Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays; on the other days he abstained from food altogether. He never tasted wine, and always wore his rough hair-shirt. He gave very little time to rest at night and slept sitting. He was very circumspect in speaking, and never permitted any one to say a disparaging word of a neighbor in his presence, as he himself never spoke ill of others. He was kind and good to all, and no one ever saw him angry, which is surely worthy of admiration. Each moment he endeavored to use to a good purpose; he was never idle, but always occupied in good works. He had two brothers and a sister, who resided at Rome, but who went to visit him in Sicily, as they had heard so much that was praiseworthy spoken of their brother. Soon after their arrival, it happened that Manucha, a powerful pirate of the Moorish king of Africa, and a bitter enemy of the Christians, sailed into the harbor of Messina, and invaded the monastery of St. Placidus. After having robbed and plundered the whole building, the barbarians took St. Placidus, his two brothers, his sister, the two monks whom

St. Benedict had given him as companions, with thirty other religious, as prisoners. Manucha commanded them to deny Christ, but as they refused to obey him, the pirate commenced to torture them, especially St. Placidus, as he encouraged the others to remain constant. The savage daily invented a new torment: they were most cruelly scourged; hung up by the feet over a fire, so that the smoke might suffocate them; and as this did not kill them, they were hung by their hands, with heavy stones tied to their feet, besides being tortured in numberless other ways. St. Placidus, who, during all this terrible suffering, did not cease to sing praises to God, had all his teeth knocked out with a stone, and his tongue torn from his mouth. Seeing at length that they could not be conquered, the inhuman tyrant had them all beheaded.

Memorable was the end of Flavia, the sister of St. Placidus, Manucha had her brought before him, and endeavored to make her deny Christ. When he perceived that he could gain no power over her, he ordered her to be hung up by the feet, and scourged most barbarously. He then said to her: "You pretend to be a noble Roman lady, and are not ashamed to appear naked!" Flavia answered: "What I suffer for the Christian faith cannot dishonor me. Do you not know any other torments? I am ready to suffer and to die." Manucha, enraged at these words, gave her up to his servants. This was more terrible to the chaste virgin than all other suffering, and she called on God for aid. The Almighty delayed not to succor her. When the wretches went to seize her, their arms became powerless, and thus the purity of the virgin was saved. She ended her life by the sword.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

Before I give you a lesson from the life of St. Placidus, I wish you to read once more the reason why the father of our Saint gave such valuable property to St. Benedict. He was convinced that his property could not be better used than for the maintenance of those who zealously served the Almighty and instructed the young. The people of our time judge quite differently; they believe that a very ill use is made of that which serves to support the clergy, and the religious in

their convents. Hence, they not only take no care to provide for them, but endeavor to deprive them of their property. That which is used for the keeping of useless animals, or in frivolous luxury, in dress, in theatres, in gaming, in all kinds of sinful amusements, that is considered well used! But let us return to the life of St. Placidus.

I. St. Placidus was never seen angry. This is saying a great deal in few words; for there is hardly a passion which is so general, and

which causes so many sins, as anger. Just wrath is in itself no sin; and we know that the most holy men, even Christ Himself, became incensed. Yet it is sure that we may become guilty of great sin by anger; for example, when we are angry without just cause; when we are incensed at things that ought not to provoke us; when we go too far in our wrath, and, perhaps, utter invectives, curses or even blasphemies; when we carry anger too long in our hearts, and when hatred and enmity proceed from it. In such cases, we become guilty of venial or mortal sin, and at the same time, we may cause others also to commit great sin. Hence, be very careful that you never become angry without just reason, that you never be angry at something that ought not to arouse your wrath; that in your anger you never overstep the proper bounds; never utter invectives, curses or blasphemies. Should you, however, have become guilty of sin through anger, try to banish it from your heart. "Every one should be slow to wrath," admonished St. James. (James, i.) "He that is easily stirred up to wrath, shall be more prone to sin," says the Proverb. (Prov. xix.) "Remove anger from thy heart," says the Holy Ghost. (Eccl. xi.) Follow these admonitions; and to be able to follow them, pray daily to God that He would give you the grace to overcome the dangerous passion of anger. God will not refuse your prayer; all will depend on your working with His grace to control yourself. Should you, however, still become guilty of anger, give yourself a penance, pray God to pardon you, and resolve to conquer yourself in future. In this manner, those of the Saints, who were by nature easily provoked, overcame their passion to their great benefit and merit.

II. St. Placidus endeavored to use every moment to the best advantage. He was never seen idle or unemployed. He recognized the value of time, and the aim and end for which God has bestowed it upon us. Ah! if you only possessed such esteem for time, you would not trifle away a single moment. "Nothing is more precious than time," writes St. Bernard; but unhappily nothing is less esteemed; the days of our salvation pass, and no one rightly considers the consequences. During a short period, man can gain pardon for his sins and eternal salvation. How valuable, therefore, must time be! None recognize this better than those to whom God gives no more time. "Should any one," says the same holy Doctor, "bring only half an hour of repentance into hell and offer it for sale, the reprobate would give thousands of worlds for it, if they had them!" Thousands of worlds for half an hour! So precious is time. But consider also, that this precious time which you have is short and irreparable. It is short. St. Paul writes: "The time is short." (1 Cor. vii.) The holy Job says: "Man lives but a short time. The days of men are short." (Job, xi.) "For behold, short years pass away." (Job, xvi.) Should your life be prolonged to one hundred years, it might yet be said with truth, the time given you is short. "Our life on earth, compared with eternity, is short, though we live ever so long," says St. Jerome. Look at your own life. The years which are past are already gone; they are yours no longer. Whether there is any time for you in the future, you do not know, nor how much of it you may call your own. Only the present time is yours, and that quickly passes; it never stands still; it is short, it is irrevocable. The hours you possessed yesterday

have fled, never to return again. With the grace of God, you may be able, if you live long enough, to make good the days you have employed ill, but they themselves will never more return. All these are truths which no one can deny. How is it possible that you do not weep tears of blood for the loss of so many inestimable hours, days, months and years, which you have not employed to your salvation? How is it possible that you do not make to-day the resolution to employ the time still left you, to the best of your ability? Recall often to

memory what I have now told you : time is precious ; time is short ; time is irrevocable. May it animate you to make good use of it. Perhaps this is the last year, the last month, which God gives you. If you do not employ it well, fear that what St. Bernard said may happen to you : " God cuts short suddenly the time of those sinners who abuse it." Should this happen to you, woe to you for all eternity ! Hence, think always of the end, and forget not, that time once lost does not return," says the blessed Thomas à Kempis.

SIXTH DAY OF OCTOBER.

ST. BRUNO, FOUNDER OF THE CARTHUSIAN ORDER.

Bruno, the celebrated founder of the Carthusian Order, was born at Cologne on the Rhine, of noble and virtuous parents, and was by them very piously educated. He was sent in his youth to Paris, where he progressed so much in all branches of learning, that he was made Doctor of Divinity, and was soon after raised to the dignity of canon at Rheims. A most horrible event took place at Paris before he left the city. A Doctor, who had always been considered very learned and at the same time very pious, died. His death seemed a very happy one, as it followed soon after his having received the holy Sacraments. But when the corpse was brought to the church, for the funeral ceremonies and the usual prayers, behold ! the dead man arose during the Office of the Dead, to the great horror of all present, and cried, with a terrible voice : " The Justice of God has accused me ! " On the second day, when the clergy had reached the same lesson in the Office, the body again moved, and cried in the same fearful tones : " The Justice of God has rejected me ! " On the third day, the same happened : the dead sitting up, cried with a still more awful voice : " The Justice of God has condemned me ! " The feelings of all present may easily be imagined. There was not one among them who did not turn pale, and all left the Church in fear and trembling. Bruno, with six of his friends, was present at this sad event, and his heart was deeply touched by

divine grace. He was so much affected by this terrible judgment of the Almighty, that he resolved, from that hour, to retire from the world and work most earnestly at the salvation of his soul, that he might one day be able to justify himself before the throne of God. He informed his friends of this, and persuaded them, by the earnestness of his words, to make the same resolution. They delayed not in carrying out their intention; but immediately sold all they possessed, gave it to the poor, and taking leave of their acquaintances, they went, clad in the poor garb of pilgrims, from Paris to Grenoble. They related to St. Hugh, the holy bishop of that city, all that had happened, and acquainted him with their plans, and begged him to assign them a place in his diocese, where they might dwell in solitude, and by a pious life, merit the favor of the Divine Judge. Hugh had dreamed the night before, that seven bright stars had dropped at his feet; and when he saw these seven men, so humble and so filled with holy zeal, he doubted not that God, being pleased with their resolution, had, by this dream, foreshadowed their coming. Hence he received them very kindly, strengthened them in their resolution and brought them to a desert called the Chartreuse. Closed in by high mountains, this wilderness was so stony and barren, that it seemed hardly a fit dwelling for wild animals, much less for cultivated men. To St. Bruno, however, it appeared to be exactly the place for his purpose.

He erected a small church there in honor of St. John the Baptist, and several poor huts, all separated from each other. This was the beginning of the Carthusian Order, which has since become so celebrated, and whose members have never abated from the fervor that distinguished the early founders. St. Bruno and his companions led a very austere life. The principal points which he observed and desired that they should observe, were: To live separated from all communication with men; to observe a continual silence, except when assembled at church to sing the praises of the Most High; always to wear hair-cloth, to abstain from meat and to fast daily; to occupy their time in prayer, singing the praises of God, reading devout books and manual labor. The holy Founder chose the Divine Mother as patroness of the Order, and St. John Baptist as its special protector, as his life might serve as a most perfect example to the hermits. The Evil One aroused many enemies to persecute the holy man and his companions; but St. Bruno continued undisturbed in the practice of what he had commenced out of love to God and for the salvation of his soul. Having lived in this desert most austere during six years, he was requested by Pope Urban II., who had known him well in former times, to come to Rome on account

of some important affairs. The holy man was not less sorry than his disciples at this news; but he was obliged to obey the Pontiff. The Saint remained six years in Rome, as the Pope needed his counsel and knowledge for the benefit of the holy church. The Pope intended, as a recompense for his faithful services, to raise him to the dignity of Archbishop of Reggio in Calabria, a see which was at that time vacant. The humble servant of God refused with many tears to accept it, saying that he had already enough account to render for his own soul and could not become responsible for the many souls which so high an office would place under his charge. The Pope was touched, and not only desisted from his intention, but also allowed St. Bruno to leave the papal court, as he desired, and reside in a solitary spot in Calabria, where, as in the Chartreuse, he could serve God in peace and quiet.

The Saint, accompanied by several who were of the same mind with him, wandered through Calabria, until he found, in the diocese of Squillaci, a desert which suited his intentions. He soon had everything arranged in the same manner as at the Chartreuse, and instituted the same rules in regard to the life and occupation of the hermits. It was there that St. Bruno passed the remainder of his days in great holiness. A certain Count of Calabria, named Roger, whilst hunting in the forest, one day came upon the huts of the monks. He was astonished no less than edified at the austerity of their life, and made St. Bruno a gift of some land which was in the neighborhood. He also had a church built for these holy men, which was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. The Almighty soon richly rewarded the liberality of the Count; for when he besieged Capua, and one of his subjects was plotting to betray him into the hands of the enemy, St. Bruno, who was far away in his solitude, appeared to the Count during the night, and apprised him of his danger.

Not long after this, the Almighty sent a dangerous sickness to the Saint as a messenger of approaching death. He received the holy Sacraments with great devotion, but first made a public confession of his faith, against the heresy which was just then making inroads on the holy Church, and admonished all present, to remain constant in the service of God. At last, clothed in his penitential garments, he took the Crucifix, and while he most devoutly kissed it, the Almighty released his soul from its earthly fetters, in the year 1101. A most miraculous spring gushed out near his tomb, the water of which cured the blind, the lame, the deaf and those who were afflicted with other infirmities.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. A great and celebrated Doctor, who, to all appearance, had lived piously, died after receiving the holy Sacraments; but was condemned. Truly a terrible event! He had either received the holy Sacraments unworthily, or had afterwards committed a mortal sin and died in it. Those who have received the sacraments do not always die happy. Not all who confess and partake of the blessed Eucharist before their end, save their souls. Many confess and receive holy Communion on their death-bed and yet are condemned. Among them are, first, those who, when in health have often received the holy Sacraments unworthily, either by wilfully concealing a mortal sin in confession, or by not repenting of their misdeeds, or by not having the firm purpose, not only of avoiding all sin but also all occasion of sin; and who, in this state, dare to partake of holy Communion. The shame which keeps them from rightly confessing their sins in health, is with many, much greater at the hour of death than it was before. The Evil One makes them believe that their sickness is not dangerous, and that they will be better able to confess this sin when they are well again; or that it is impossible to repeat all their former unworthy confessions. Hence it happens, that as, in health, they made bad confessions and unworthy communions, so in sickness, they do the same. Secondly, those who have lived a long time in great hatred, not forgiving their enemies. Thirdly, those who were addicted to the vice of unchastity, and did not endeavor to reform while they had health. These have every reason to fear that, although they receive the holy Sacraments worthily on their death-bed, they may after-

wards fall again into the old sin, die in it, and thus go to eternal perdition; because the Evil One returns to the attack after they have received the Sacraments, and most vividly represents to them the wrong done them, and renews their hatred or the sensual delight in which they formerly indulged, and makes them sin by complacency and desire. As they have been accustomed to yield to the temptations of the devil, they will then very easily be again overcome; and should they die without another, confession, or if this is impossible, without perfect contrition, they will most surely be condemned. Oh! that the three classes of men above mentioned would rightly consider the terrible danger of their situation. If you would avoid it, confess and receive holy Communion as you ought. Do not harbor any hatred in your heart, and be not a slave to the sin of impurity, or, if unhappily it has taken hold of you, tear yourself away from it. Accustom yourself always to fight bravely against the temptations of Satan.

II. St. Bruno was filled with a wholesome terror by the miserable end of the celebrated Doctor, and resolved to live in great austerity, in order to be able to justify himself before the judgment-seat of the Almighty and to escape hell. You hear and read so many awful examples of persons dying without time for repentance. Why then do you not determine to do penance and reform? I fear you do not consider as earnestly as St. Bruno did, what it is to appear before the judgment-seat of a just and omniscient Judge, or what it is to be eternally lost. For your own salvation, I exhort and beseech you to think in future frequently on the judgment of God. Think often of hell. "Think of

the divine judgment," says St. Cyril of Jerusalem, "and neither impurity nor any other vice will gain power over you. As soon as you forget God and His judgment, you will think of sin and you will commit

it." "I beseech you," says St. Chrysostom, "think of hell. The Evil One leaves nothing undone to make you forget hell. By thinking earnestly of hell, we prevent our falling into it."

NOTICE. The history of the unhappy doctor, related above has been rejected by several modern authors as unfounded; but Daniel Papebrock, one of the learned Bollandists, who wrote the life of St. Bruno, cites the testimony of several creditable Authors for the truth of the story. The Carthusians themselves, who ought best

to know the origin of their Order, do not doubt its truth, but cite it as the cause which led to the conversion of their holy Founder, as may be seen in the annals of their Order, printed in 1687. We desire to inform the reader of this, in order that he may not be confused when he hears that others maintain the contrary.

SEVENTH DAY OF OCTOBER.

ST. OSITHA, VIRGIN AND MARTYR.

St. Ositha, a royal princess of England, ascended to heaven in 653, adorned with the double crown of virginity and martyrdom. Her parents, Friedebald and Witteberga, greatly inclined to piety, sent their daughter early into a convent, that she might receive a pious education. St. Editha, the sister of a Saxon king, was Abbess at the same convent and, leading a holy life herself, she endeavored early to inspire Ositha with love for all that was good and virtuous. Ositha, obeying her in everything, showed, in her very childhood, the greatest zeal and fervor. The example of the holy Abbess and of the other Religious was constantly before her eyes and she endeavored to conform her life to it.

One day, Editha gave the little maiden a book, with the request that she would carry it to a neighboring convent and hand it to the Abbess Modwena. To go to this convent, Ositha had to cross a bridge, and she had hardly placed her foot upon it, when a violent wind tore her away, from the side of the servant who accompanied her, into the river. Editha and Modwena, when informed of it, ran in great trepidation to the water, but saw no trace of the beloved child. They therefore took refuge in prayer, and after it, Modwena called aloud: "Ositha! Ositha! in the name of the Holy Trinity, arise out of the water!" Ositha immediately rose to the surface, crying: "I am here, my lady! I am here!" Holding the book in her hand which she was to carry to Modwena, she floated to the shore. Both the holy Abbesses wept for joy, and thanked God for so visible a miracle. Ositha increased her zeal to serve the Almighty, as she recognized that she had again owed Him her life. Her father, some years later, recalled her to Court, where she soon became aware of the many

dangers which surrounded her, but always knew how to conduct herself in such a manner, that she kept her innocence unspotted. The means she used for this were prayer, mortification of the body and partaking frequently of the Holy Communion. Thus she remained in the path of virtue, and was not carried away by the pleasures and vanities of life at court.

In the course of time, Sigerius, a powerful monarch of the East Angles, desired Ositha in marriage. The parents consented without any hesitation, but Ositha, who had already taken the vow of perpetual virginity, could not be moved. Her parents at last used force, and Ositha was obliged to yield. The marriage ceremonies were performed with regal splendor; but the bride, with deep sighs and tears, prayed to the Almighty to aid her in preserving her purity. God heard and assisted her. An unexpected event called Sigerius away; and he had hardly departed, when Ositha secretly left the court, fled to a convent, had her hair cut off and attired herself in the religious habit. After this, she prayed with humble trust to God, to turn the heart of her spouse, so that he might not prevent her from what she had done out of love to chastity. Her prayers were answered; for when Sigerius was informed of what had taken place, although deeply grieved at the loss of so amiable a spouse, he would not interfere with her desire, but wished her every happiness in the vocation she had chosen. He even built a convent for her and endowed it richly, that she might live so much more undisturbed with those who desired to follow her. The joy that filled Ositha's heart at the noble conduct of her spouse, it is impossible to express.

Ositha led, in the new convent, a life which was more angelic than human, until an army of Danish pirates landed on the neighboring coast. Devastation followed them wherever they went; they ravaged the country with fire and sword. Their greatest fury was spent upon the convent; and when the pirates had forced their way into it, their chief, hearing that Ositha was of royal descent, desired to make her his wife. The chaste virgin fearlessly assured him that she could never be united to him, not only because she was a Christian and he a pagan, but much more because she already had a divine spouse. The savage would not desist, but persecuted her for a long time with persuasion and promises; but when at length he found that all was useless, his love turned into hatred, and he told her with the most terrible menaces, that she must immediately abandon her faith, or she would not live an hour longer. St. Ositha, rejoicing at this opportunity to give her life for Christ's sake, exclaimed that she was ready to die, not once but a hundred, nay a thousand times, rather than renounce Christ. Such grand heroism was more

than the savage could endure, and, unsheathing his sword, he decapitated the chaste Christian virgin. Thus did Ositha gloriously end her innocent life, and God honored her tomb by many miracles.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Ositha's life was miraculously preserved; and this impelled her to redouble her zeal in the service of God. Have you never been in danger of losing your life? Perhaps more than once. Who saved you in this danger? Do you think that it happened by chance that you did not perish? The same God who gave you life, preserved it in the hour of danger. Should not this be reason enough for you to serve God so much more fervently and to employ your days in His service only? At least, the remembrance of this benefit ought to restrain you from offending so gracious a God. If a physician were to cure you, by especial care and skill, of a dangerous malady, when every one thought you could not be saved from death, would you be so ungrateful as to do him harm or wrong and wound him? Certainly not. And why not? "O!" you would say; "he has saved my life. He does not deserve an injury from me." But does God, who has so often shielded you in the greatest danger, not deserve as much? Oh! be ashamed of the ingratitude which you have until now shown to the Almighty, and reform. Truly, God, so kind to you, has not deserved that you should offend Him again, but that you should employ your whole life in His service.

II. St Ositha preserved her innocence unspotted amidst the dangers of the Court. The means she employed to effect this were prayer, mortification, and partaking frequently of the holy Sacrament. There is no place in the world

where we cannot live piously.* Even at Sodom, Lot lived a godly life. There are dangers everywhere; but God has bestowed upon us means, by the aid of which, we can live securely and piously, in the midst of such dangers as we cannot avoid. One of these means is the frequent partaking of Holy Communion. It strengthens us in our spiritual life, and prevents us from falling easily into sin and from dying spiritually by losing the grace of the Most High. Hence, Christ instituted the holy Eucharist in the form of bread, as St. Thomas has taught us. For as bread gives us strength, and preserves our bodily life, thus is the soul of man strengthened and his spiritual life preserved by the Blessed Sacrament; but with the great difference which Christ Himself pointed out to us when He said, that those who had eaten the Manna in the desert, were dead, while those who would partake of the bread which He would give, were to live eternally, that is, they would continue to live in His grace. And as it is necessary for the preservation of our bodily existence, that we partake frequently of bread, so he who would preserve his spiritual life should frequently receive holy Communion. Christ, our Lord has commanded us to receive it. The first Christians went daily to holy Communion; hence their pious conduct. When in the course of time, Christians lost much of their fervor, the church commanded that they should go to holy Communion three times a year; and still later, at least once, at Easter. Pious

Christians, however, go much more frequently ; many do it every month when they have an opportunity. Do the same, my dear reader, if you cannot do it every week. I also advise you to follow those who make a Spiritual Communion at Mass, every day. This consists in awakening during the communion of the priest, a lively faith in the presence of Christ, a strong hope and fervent love, as also deep sorrow for your sins and an intense desire to receive the Lord in the holy Sacrament. This spiritual communion is as beneficial to the soul as it is easy to practise. But especially be careful that you never partake of the blessed Eucharist without due preparation, as I have already admo-

nished you elsewhere ; and you will surely derive from it the same beneficial effect which the Almighty bestowed upon St. Ositha. "You must go often to the source of mercy, that you may be cleansed from all evil thoughts, and strengthened against the temptations of Satan," says the pious Thomas à Kempis. The prophet Elias was so much strengthened by the bread which he ate at the command of the angel, that he walked forty days and nights, until he had reached Mount Horeb. St. Thomas says that by frequently partaking of holy Communion, you will be strengthened to practise virtue ; you will be led to Heaven !

EIGHTH DAY OF OCTOBER.

ST. BRIDGET, WIDOW.

St. Bridget, known in the entire Church of God, on account of the many divine revelations with which she was graced, was born in Sweden, of noble and pious parents. Shortly before the birth of Bridget, her mother was in great danger of shipwreck, but was miraculously saved. In the following night, a venerable old man appeared to her, who said : " God has saved your life on account of the child to whom you will give birth. Educate it carefully ; for it will arrive at great holiness." This command was faithfully followed by the pious mother as long as she lived. After her death, Bridget, then only seven years old, was given into the charge of a very devout aunt, who brought her up most piously. When ten years of age, she heard a sermon on the bitter passion and death of our Lord, which made a deep impression on her young and tender heart. In the following night, Christ appeared to her, hanging on the Cross, while streams of blood flowed from His wounds. Bridget, deeply moved, cried out : " O, Lord, who has so maltreated thee ? " " Those who despise my love," answered Christ, that is, those who transgress my laws and are ungrateful for my immeasurable love to them. This

vision remained in Bridget's memory, and caused her, from that hour, to manifest the most tender devotion to the passion and death of the Saviour, of which she could never think without shedding tears. This vision was followed by many others, especially during her prayers, which the Saint loved so well that it seemed as if no other occupation could give her joy or contentment. She often rose quietly during the night and passed hours in pious meditation. She also used many ways and means to mortify her delicate body, so as to resemble, in silently enduring pain, Him who had suffered so infinitely more for her. In obedience to her father, she at the age of thirteen gave her hand to Ulpho, prince of Nericia, whose heart she won so entirely by her amiability and sweetness of manners, that she weaned him, in a short time, from gaming, immoderate luxury in dress and other similar faults, and induced him to lead a life pleasing to God, by his assiduity in prayer and in going to confession. She lived with him in undisturbed love and harmony. She was also very solicitous for her domestics, and allowed nothing that might offend the Almighty or prevent His blessing from coming upon her house. She became the mother of four sons and as many daughters. Two of her sons died in their innocence; two while travelling in the Holy Land. Two of her daughters lived at court, and became models of all virtues. The third became a nun and led a holy life, and the fourth, Catherine, was numbered among the Saints; which is evidence of the pious care with which St. Bridget educated her children. She herself instructed them in religion and in the way of living piously, and led them, from their most tender years, to practise works of charity and mortification, being an example to them in all virtuous deeds. With the consent of Ulpho, she founded a hospital and waited daily, at certain hours, like a servant, on the poor and sick, who were in it. She often washed their feet, kissing them most reverentially. Her husband became dangerously ill on his return from Compostella, whither he had gone with St. Bridget, to visit the tomb of the holy Apostle St. James. But St. Dionysius, who appeared to Bridget, announced to her, besides other future events, that Ulpho would soon recover. She soon saw this prophecy fulfilled, and had also the joy to perceive that Ulpho was disgusted with the world and desired to end his life in retirement. With the permission of his pious spouse, he went into a Cistercian monastery, where he ended his life most holily.

Bridget lived thirty years after her husband had entered a monastery, and being free from many former cares and anxieties, she devoted herself with great zeal to a most perfect and penitential life. Her temporal possessions she gave to her children,

clothed herself in a penitential robe, and unweariedly practised acts of devotion, charity and penance. She fasted four times in the week, and on Friday, took only water and bread. She gave the greater part of the night to prayer, spending whole hours prostrate before the Crucifix or the Blessed Sacrament. Every Friday she let fall a few drops of boiling wax into a wound which she had, to remember, by the pain this gave her, the suffering of our Lord. She daily fed twelve poor persons and served them at table. She founded a convent for sixty nuns, and gave them a rule which she had received from Christ Himself. These regulations were afterwards adopted by many houses of Religious men. This was the origin of the celebrated Brigittine Order. St. Bridget herself entered a convent which she had founded, and was a shining light to all in the practice of virtue.

Having lived there two years, she was commanded, in a vision, to make a pilgrimage to Rome, with her daughter Catherine, and thence to the Holy Land. On her return, a malignant fever seized her, which greatly increased when she had arrived at Rome, and lasted a whole year. The great pains she suffered were made easy to her by the thought of the bitter passion of our Saviour; and for love of Him, she was willing to endure much more. She derived the greatest comfort from a vision in which God appeared to her and assured her of her salvation. The hour of her death was also made known to her by divine revelation. She prepared herself most carefully for her end, and after receiving the holy sacraments, she breathed her last in the arms of her holy daughter, and, rich in merits and virtues, went to receive her reward in heaven, in the 71st. year of her age, in the year 1373. Before and after her death God wrought many and great miracles by her intercession.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Christ appeared to St. Bridget, wounded over His whole body, saying that those who had despised His love, and had shown themselves ungrateful for His mercies, had thus maltreated Him. Are you not also one of those who despise the Saviour's love and show themselves ungrateful to Him? Are you not, perhaps, even one of those who, according to the words of St. Paul, crucify Him anew? "You crucify the Lord anew as often as you become guilty

of a mortal sin," says Hugh, the Cardinal. And how often has this happened? And what were your reasons for so doing? What could you answer, if Christ would address you, as St. Bernard introduces Him speaking: "Am I not yet wounded enough for you? Have I not yet sufficiently suffered for your misdeeds? why do you still add new pains to the old ones? The wounds of your sins are much more painful to me than the wounds of my body."

What, I ask, could you answer, if Christ spoke thus to you? Oh! prostrate yourself before your crucified Saviour, humbly ask His pardon and promise Him that in future you will show yourself grateful and not offend Him. In every temptation to sin, remember your crucified Lord, and address yourself in the words of St. Bernard: "My God hangs on the Cross, and shall I submit to lust?" Shall I sin? Shall I, for a miserable gain, for a short sensual pleasure, offend my God? "How can I do this wicked thing, and sin against my God?" said the chaste Joseph, when tempted to sin (Genesis, xxxix.). He meant by this, that it was impossible for him to offend so great and so good a God. "How can I sin against my God?" Speak thus to yourself, when Satan or men tempt you to sin. How dare I do it? How can I thus offend my good God? How thus offend my kind Redeemer, and open afresh all His wounds? But your acts must correspond with these words, and as Joseph rather drew upon himself the anger of his mistress and all that might follow it, than offend God, so in the same manner must you act.

II. St. Bridget, in a most gentle manner, reformed her husband of many faults, such as gaming and immoderate love of dress. She taught her children to pray, to perform works of mercy, and mortification. Oh! that all wives would so act to their husbands; all mothers adopt the same plan in the education of their children! How great would their merit be on earth, and how inexpressible their joy at meet-

ing their children in a happy eternity! But on the contrary, how heavy will be the account which those women will have to render before God, and how excruciating their pain in hell, who have incited their husbands to pride, to hatred, and to enmity, to oppression and persecution of their neighbor, to all kinds of fraud, injustice, and other vices! And terrible too will be the punishment of those mothers who take not proper care in the instruction of their children, who do not correct their faults, who do not lead them, by precept and example, to piety, but to frivolous vanities, to love of dress and of the world and all kinds of sinful amusements. What has here been said applies also to husbands and fathers. Married people should love each other; and what is more opposed to Christian love, than for one to be to the other an occasion of sin, and thus injure one who should be shielded from all evil? Both parents are obliged to lead their children, by word and example, in the path to heaven, and to teach them those lessons which God gives so emphatically by the Psalmist: "That they may put their hope in God and may not forget the works of God." (Psalm lxxvii.) If they neglect this, and perhaps do the contrary, what Origen says will happen to them: "The parents will have to render account of the sins of their children, if they have not instructed them well, and punished them duly; for, it is they who are guilty of the eternal perdition of their children, and they condemn themselves for all eternity."

NINTH DAY OF OCTOBER.

ST. DIONYSIUS, AND HIS COMPANIONS; ST. GEREON, ST. VICTOR, ST. CASSIUS AND ST. FLORENTIUS, MARTYRS.

Athens, in Greece, was the birthplace of St. Dionysius, the great Apostle of France. Already in his youth he devoted himself with so much zeal to the study of science, especially astronomy, that he was rightly counted one of the most learned men of the city. Hence he became one of the twelve judges or magistrates of Athens, who were called Areopagites, because they administered justice at a place named Areopagus. When, at the time of the Crucifixion of Christ, a three hours' darkness, covered the earth, Dionysius was at Heliopolis, and as he perceived that this darkness was against the course of nature, he publicly declared while contemplating it: "Either the Lord of nature is suffering, or the world is coming to an end."

When, some years later, St. Paul came to Athens and announced to the inhabitants of the city the only true God and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, he was taken to the Areopagus, that he might there justify his new teachings. The holy Apostle did so with great energy, and when, in conclusion, he spoke of the resurrection of Christ, and at the same time said that all men would rise again from death, some shook their heads doubtingly, others derided him, but some believed his words. Among the latter was Dionysius, who invited St. Paul into his house, and after being instructed by him, was baptized. The holy Apostle perceived in Dionysius great abilities for disseminating the Christian faith. Hence he instructed him most thoroughly in everything pertaining both to faith and to the practice of a Christian life, and consecrated him Bishop of Athens. Dionysius led many heathens by his sermons and virtuous example to the knowledge of Christ, and to a life worthy of their belief. At one time he made a journey to Jerusalem, as well to visit the places watered with the blood of the Saviour, as also to see Mary, the Mother of the Redeemer, who was still living. He afterwards related that, at the sight of her, he was so much overcome, that he would have worshipped her as a Goddess, had not his faith taught him that there was only one God.

Some years later, he appointed some one else to take his place as bishop, and went to Rome to the holy Pope Clement. Greatly rejoiced at his fervor and zeal to convert the heathen, the Pope sent him to France; to win the inhabitants of so large a

country to the sweet yoke of Christ; as those, who had been sent thither by St. Peter, were no longer among the living. St. Dionysius set out on his journey, accompanied by a priest named Rusticus, and by Eleutherius, a deacon, and a few other zealous men. Many say that he went first to Arles, where many had become Christians, having been converted and baptized by St. Trophimus. Here he remained for some time to the great benefit of the faithful, to whom he gave a bishop, that they might be strengthened and still better instructed in their new faith. From Arles, the Saint repaired to Paris, the Capital of the land, where he preached the Gospel with such energy, and confirmed his words by so many miracles, that the inhabitants became converted in great numbers. They broke to pieces or burned the idols they had until then worshipped, and erected several Churches to the true God; one in honor of the Holy Trinity, others dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, St. Peter, St Paul and St. Stephen. The first stood where afterwards the Church of St. Benedict was built, and where yet remain in the chapel of St Denis, the words: "In this chapel St. Dionysius invoked the Holy Trinity."

The devil, finding the rapid growth of Christianity unendurable, incited against the Saint the idolatrous priests, who went to the Pagan Governor, Fescennius, and accused the new teachers as seducers of the people, and enemies of the gods. They at the same time insisted that he should do away with them, if he would save the city from ruin. Fescennius immediately had the Saint and his companions taken prisoners and brought into his presence. Immediately on their arrival he commanded them to revoke the doctrines they had preached and to worship the old gods. Dionysius, indignant at this order, represented to the governor the falsity of the Pagan gods; but the blinded tyrant gave no heed to his words and condemned him and the others to be tortured. First they were scourged; then tied upon gridirons, and slowly roasted, so that their death might be as painful as possible. The Almighty, however, took from the fire all power to burn, and the holy martyrs remained unharmed. Fescennius, still more embittered by this miracle, confined them in a dark, damp dungeon, the air of which was stifling, and a few days later cast them before wild beasts. But St. Dionysius, by making the sign of the holy Cross over himself and blessing the animals, made them so tame that they laid themselves down quietly at his feet. The governor, more wild, more cruel than the beasts of the forest, would not be conquered, but commanded St. Dionysius to be put upon the rack and to be torn with iron hooks. The holy Martyr bore this torture fearlessly, and praised and thanked God that he was found worthy to suffer for Christ's sake. and exhorted all present to be

converted to Christianity. All who were witnesses of the fearful spectacle were greatly astonished and moved, that a man of 106 years bore with such undaunted courage the most terrible pains, and had the fortitude to announce Christ even in the agonies of death. A great many concluded from it, that the faith he preached must be true, and confessed publicly that they would embrace Christianity. Hence, Fescennius, to end the martyrdom of the Saint, ordered him and his companions to be beheaded. The joy which St. Dionysius felt at this sentence can hardly be expressed, as he looked upon his death as the commencement of eternal happiness. When the head of the Saint was severed from his body, he, by a wonderful miracle, seized the head with both hands, and carried it to a place two miles from Paris. A city named after him was afterwards built on the spot, in commemoration of this miracle. Catulla, a holy matron, who had been converted by the Saint, went to meet him and received the head, which she guarded as a precious treasure during the persecution, after which it was buried with the rest of the body with all due honors. This great miracle had so many witnesses, that its truth cannot be doubted. Many of the heathens who had seen it were in consequence converted to Christianity. Three centuries after the glorious death of St. Dionysius, St. Genevieve erected over his tomb, a magnificent church, which again two centuries later, was changed by King Dagobert into a still more splendid one, with a monastery attached to it which in time became quite celebrated. The Kings of France selected this Church for their last resting-place. There are still extant some learned books written by St. Dionysius; but the enemies of the Church refuse to acknowledge the Saint as the author of them, because he clearly proves that those ceremonies and customs which they have rejected, were already used in the Catholic Church, more than a thousand years before Luther, and that the true Christians of those days believed all that Catholics now believe in regard to holy Mass and other articles. I know also that some Catholics, though for other reasons, doubt the authenticity of the same works; but it is also known that many learned Catholics have refuted the objections which have been brought against them. There are also some historians, who maintain, that it was another Dionysius that preached the Gospel in Paris, and suffered martyrdom there. Their reasons for thus saying are, however, not conclusive. Many men, renowned for their learning, give it as their conviction, that the objections raised against the ancient traditions are groundless, and follow, as we have done, the Roman Breviary and Martyrology.

This day is also commemorated by the death of St. Gereon,

St. Victor, St. Cassius, St. Florentius and other holy martyrs, who suffered under the reign of the Emperor Maximian. The following account of them has been handed down to us :—

When the Emperor heard that Carausius, the Roman Governor in the Netherlands, entertained a suspicious intercourse with the enemies of the Empire, the fear took possession of him that a revolution might be the result of it. Hence he sent a considerable army on the Rhine, to prevent an insurrection, and to keep the people in subjection. The commanders of this army were Gereon, Victor, Cassius, and Florentius. When they were already on their journey, the Emperor issued an order to all the Roman Governors in Gaul, to kill without any exception every soldier who confessed Christianity and refused to worship the gods. Having been informed that the commanders, Gereon, Victor, Cassius and Florentius, had confessed themselves Christians, he sent some armed heathen soldiers after them to treat them in accordance with his order. They found St. Cassius, St. Florentius and seven other Christian knights near Bonn on the Rhine, and asked them whether they were willing to obey the imperial command and worship the gods? "We worship no other God but the one true and living God of heaven and earth," replied they, fearlessly. With these words they spoke their own death-sentence. They were all cut to pieces on the spot. After this the soldiers marched on till they came to Cologne. At the gates of the city, they found St. Gereon with his soldiers in number 318. When the Saint saw the bloodthirsty Pagans coming, he assembled his soldiers, not to put himself into a posture of defence, but to admonish them to remain faithful to their God. He had hardly begun to address his men when the heathen soldiers reached them. Their leader informed St. Gereon and the soldiers of the imperial decree, and asked whether they would obey the Emperor or lose their lives. Gereon, answering for all of them, said: "We are Christians, and we would rather die a thousand deaths than depart from our faith. We have always faithfully served the Emperor against his enemies, but we cannot at his command forsake the true God and sacrifice to lifeless idols." These words had scarcely passed his lips when the swords of the heathens were drawn, mowing the Christians down right and left until all were lying dead upon the ground. There was not one of them who had not cheerfully suffered martyrdom. Especially St. Gereon had manifested great joy to suffer for Christ's sake, and animated his men to remain faithful. He thanked God that He had given him the grace to die for his faith.

The same happened to the Christian hero, St. Victor, whom

the Pagan murderers found near Xanthen, with 330 soldiers, who refusing to obey the wicked order of the Emperor, were immediately cut to pieces.

On the spot where St. Gereon suffered martyrdom, St. Helena, mother of Constantine the Great, erected, during her residence in Gaul, a magnificent church, which is still standing at Cologne, and bears the name of the Saint. His holy relics are preserved there and greatly honored by all the faithful.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Gereon rejoiced during his martyrdom, and thanked God that he was deemed worthy to die for his faith. St. Dionysius praised and thanked God also during his tortures. "Even the heathen can praise and thank God in happy days," says St. Jerome, "but Christians praise and thank Him in their suffering as well." Do you not in this regard act more like a heathen than like a true Christian? You praise and thank God when everything goes according to your wishes, but in adverse circumstances, you murmur and complain against Him. The Saints did not act thus, and no true Christian ought to be guilty of so doing. "Let us become accustomed to thank God, not only in prosperity, but also in suffering," says St. Gregory. If you have to suffer, regard it as something which God sends you for your welfare, and praise and thank Him for being so kind to you. Praise Him, as I have already told you, not only in word but still more in action. Job praised God with his mouth during his sufferings; so did the three companions of Daniel in the burning furnace, St. Tobias in his blindness, St. Dionysius, and thousands of others during their martyrdom. But they also praised God in action, because they bore their crosses patiently. Follow their example. You also will

praise God in action, if you do well all that you have to do, and according to the will of the Almighty. In this manner will you be able to praise your God without ceasing. "If you wish to praise God always," says St. Augustine, "do rightly that which you have to do, and every one of your actions will be praise to the Almighty."

II. St. Dionysius became 106, or as others say, 110 years old. All these years, except those that he lived in the blindness of paganism, he employed in the service of God and the salvation of souls. O! how great a treasure of merit he gathered for himself during this long time. How great must be the glory and happiness therefore, which he now enjoys in heaven! You will probably not live so long: but this matters not, as the question is not how long we live, but how well. Many suffer in hell who lived long but not well; and many are in heaven whose life was short but virtuous. Your principal care ought to be to employ the time God gives you, be it long or short, in His service, thus gathering for yourself a great treasure of merits for eternity, by practising good works and by patiently enduring trials and sufferings. "As long as time is left to us," writes St. Chrysostom, "let us at least employ as much industry to gain spiritual treasures, as the children of the

world employ to gain worthless and perishable earthly goods." Temporal gain, temporal goods have brought no one comfort in his last hour, have made no one happy in eternity. On the contrary, what fear, what pain have many endured on their death-bed, at the thought that they had spent the most of their time in gaining temporal goods, which they have to leave behind, as they cannot take them into eternity. How many are unhappy in the other world on account of their temporal goods, because they either gained them sinfully, or were too much attached

to them, or employed them wrongly. If they had only used half the time which they bestowed on temporal goods, in order to obtain spiritual, eternal blessings, how happy might they now be! May you become wise by the misfortune of others. Employ the time which God yet grants you, in securing the salvation of your soul. Be zealous in good works, patient in trials; and you will lay up for yourself a great treasure of merits for eternity. "Thou shalt have treasures in heaven!" (Luke, xviii.)

TENTH DAY OF OCTOBER.

ST. FRANCIS BORGIA, CONFESSOR.

St. Francis Borgia, a bright example of virtue, both for ecclesiastics and laymen, was born in 1510, at Gandia, in Spain. His father was John Borgia, the third Duke of Gandia; and his mother, Joanna of Aragon, grand-daughter to Ferdinand the Catholic. Francis, when only a child, was already remarkable for his virtue and piety. When scarcely seventeen years, old he came to the Court of the Emperor Charles V., where, notwithstanding the many and great dangers to which he was exposed, he preserved his innocence by frequently partaking of the Blessed Sacrament, by great devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and the practice of mortification. His talents and his edifying life gained him the esteem of the Emperor; hence the Empress gave him in marriage a very virtuous lady, who was a great favorite of hers. Francis was then made chief equerry to the Emperor, and created Marquis of Lombay. The court which Francis kept after he was married might have served as a model to all Christian princes. He distributed the hours of the day, so that certain times were devoted to prayer, to business, and to recreation. He, at the same time, began the praiseworthy practice of selecting every month a Saint for especial veneration. He was much opposed to gaming, and did not allow his servants to indulge in it. He used to say: "Gaming is accompanied by great losses;

loss of money, loss of time, loss of devotion, and loss of conscience." The same aversion he had for the reading of frivolous books, even if they were not immoral. He found his greatest delight in reading devout books, and said: "The reading of devout books is the first step towards a better life." At the period in which he lived the principal enjoyments of the higher classes were music and hawking; and, as he could not abstain from them entirely, he took care, at such times, to raise his thoughts to the Almighty, and to mortify himself. Thus, when he went hawking, he closed his eyes at the very moment when the hawk swooped; the sight of which, they say, was the chief pleasure of this kind of hunting.

The Almighty, to draw His servant entirely away from the world, sent him several severe maladies, which made him recognize the instability of all that is earthly. He became more fully aware of this after the death of the Empress, whose wondrous beauty was everywhere extolled. By the order of the Emperor, it became the duty of Francis to escort the remains to the royal vault at Granada. There the coffin was opened before the burial took place, and the sight that greeted the beholders was most awful. Nothing was left of the beautiful Empress but a corpse, so disfigured, that all averted their eyes, whilst the odor it exhaled was so offensive that most of the spectators were driven away.

St. Francis was most deeply touched, and when, after the burial, he went into his room, prostrated himself before the crucifix, and having given vent to his feelings, he exclaimed: "No, no, my God! in future I will have no master whom death can take from me." He then made a vow that he would enter a religious order, should he survive his consort. He often used to say afterwards: "The death of the Empress awakened me to life." When Francis returned from Granada the Emperor created him Viceroy of Catalonia, and in this new dignity the holy Duke continued to lead rather a religious than a worldly life. He had a fatherly care for his subjects, and every one had at all hours admittance to him. Towards the poor he manifested great kindness. He daily gave four or five hours to prayer. He fasted almost daily, and scourged himself to blood. He assisted at Mass, and received Holy Communion every day. When he heard that disputes had arisen among the theologians at the universities, in regard to the frequent use of Holy Communion, he wrote to St. Ignatius, at Rome, and asked his opinion on the subject. St. Ignatius wrote back to him, approving of the frequent use of Holy Communion, and strengthening him in his thoughts about it. Meanwhile, the death of his father brought

upon him the administration of his vast estates, without, however, in the least changing his pious manner of living. Soon after his pious consort, who was his equal in virtue, became sick. Francis prayed most fervently to God for her recovery. One day, while he was thus praying, he heard an interior voice, which said these words: "If thou desirest that thy consort should recover, thy wish shall be fulfilled, but it will not benefit thee." Frightened at these words, he immediately conformed his own will in all things to the Divine will. From that moment the condition of the Duchess grew worse, and she died, as she had lived, piously and peacefully. St. Francis, remembering his vow, determined to execute it without delay. Taking counsel of God and of his confessor, he chose the Society of Jesus, which had recently been instituted. Writing to St. Ignatius, he asked for admittance, which was cheerfully granted. But, to settle his affairs satisfactorily, he was obliged to remain four years longer in his offices. Having at length, by the permission of the Emperor, resigned his possessions to his eldest son, he took the religious habit, and proceeded to Rome. Scarcely four months had elapsed since his arrival, when he was informed that the Pope wished to make him a cardinal; and, to avoid this dignity, he returned to Spain. Being ordained priest, he said his first Mass in the chapel of the Castle of Loyola, where St. Ignatius had been born; and then spent a few years in preaching and instructing the people. It would take more space than is allowed to us to relate how many sinners he converted, and how much he labored for the honor of God and the salvation of souls. During this time he visited Charles V., in the solitude which this great Emperor had chosen to pass his last days, after he had abdicated his throne. At length, St. Francis was recalled to Rome, where he was, much against his will, elected General of the Society of Jesus. He fulfilled the many and arduous duties of this office with the utmost diligence; his greatest care being to further the honor of God and the salvation of souls. To effect this he founded colleges in many cities, and sent apostolic men into all parts of the world to convert the heathen. In all the persecutions of the Society he placed his trust in God. He used to say that the Society was hated and persecuted, first by the heretics and infidels; secondly, by those who led a godless life; and thirdly, by those who were not well informed as to the end and aim which its members had in view. When he had for seven years most wisely governed the Society, the Pope sent him, on most important business of the Church, to Spain, Portugal, and France. This long and painful journey, with the labors of his mission, exhausted his strength so that

he fell ill before he had reached Rome on his return. Perceiving the danger in which he was, he made all possible haste, but visited on his way the holy house of Loretto, to commend himself to the protection of the Blessed Virgin. When at last he arrived at Rome, more dead than alive, he prepared himself without delay to receive the last Sacraments. The time still left him on earth he passed in devout exercises; and therefore declined to receive the visits even of bishops and cardinals, saying that he had now to do only with God, the Lord of life and death. Before his death, while silently praying, he fell into an ecstasy; and after it, full of confidence and hope, he gave his soul into the hands of his Heavenly Father, in the year 1572. His body was looked upon and honored as that of a Saint, by the prelates of the Church, as well as by the laity; and God approved their veneration by many miracles.

Still clearer proofs of the holiness of the Saint were the virtues by which he shone as well in his religious life, as while he was in the world at his father's house and at Court. Those who frequently made use of his advice, among whom was St. Teresa, looked upon him as a Saint; and this was also the opinion of many others, who knew his holy manner of living. We have not space to speak of all his virtues; but one of them we cannot pass over in silence. This is the virtue of humility, or of despising all worldly honors. His humility was as deep and admirable as his birth and the dignities conferred upon him were high. It was through humility that he, more than once, refused the Cardinal's hat. As much as others desire praise, so much did he prefer to be despised. He was never heard to say a word in praise of himself, neither would he allow others to extol him. His signature to his letters was generally, "Francis, the sinner." He esteemed himself worthy of no honor, but only of punishment and disdain. When, in travelling, he was taken to a miserable inn and ill served, he uttered not a word of complaint, but said that it was better than he deserved. As General of the Society, he performed the lowest work in the house. He served the cook, gave food to the poor at the door, swept the house, and carried baskets of bread and other food to the indigent. The many wrongs and injuries which God permitted to be done him; the many persecutions which he innocently suffered; the pains of several maladies,—all these he bore, not only with Christian patience, but with joy and a desire to suffer still more. He often prayed most earnestly to God to give him still greater crosses, as he believed that his sins deserved more punishment. This admirable humility was the result of his severe and daily mortification. Hence it came that he was indefatigable in prac-

tising penance. He was very corpulent as Duke, but afterwards became so reduced by fasting that he could fold his skin, in the breadth of a yard, like a coat around him. He made the food he took disagreeable by adding to it several bitter herbs. When sick he took his remedies very slowly, the longer to taste their bitterness. He scourged himself daily most mercilessly, and it was known that he gave himself as many as eight hundred strokes. Around his body he constantly wore a sharp-pointed iron girdle. In one word, there was no kind of humiliation and mortification which he could think of that he did not practise. Hence it is not to be wondered at that God, who exalts those who humble themselves, gave to St. Francis the gifts of prophecy, of freeing the possessed, curing the sick, and of working other miracles.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Francis instituted at his court, before he entered a religious life, the veneration of the Saints of the Month. Every Catholic, besides worshipping the Almighty, ought to honor the Saints. We should especially honor the Divine Mother, as the Queen of all the Saints; then, the foster-father of Christ, St. Joseph; and further, our Guardian Angel and Patron Saint. Besides this, we ought to select some special Patrons for whom we feel particular esteem and love. It is also very beneficial to adopt the practise of the monthly Patrons. This consists in selecting, on the last day of every month, a Saint whose festival will be celebrated during the following month. Daily should he be invoked and honored. If possible his life should be read and something from it be selected for imitation. We may also approach the Sacraments on his festival, or on the Sunday after it; and employ a little more time than usual in good works. It is known that several great servants of God, at the end of their days, called upon the Saints whom they had honored as their monthly Pa-

trons during life, and it cannot be doubted that they received benefit and comfort. "Every one," says St. Bonaventure, "ought to venerate an especial Saint with great devotion. To him he ought daily to commend himself, and practise some good work in his honor."

II. The contemplation of the corpse of the empress who had been celebrated for her beauty, caused St. Francis to despise the world, and to make the heroic resolution to serve God alone. Oh! that those blind persons, who are so enchanted by the beauty of a mortal being, that they forfeit for it their souls and their salvation, would earnestly reflect how the body of that human being will look, after the soul has left it. Nobody can then remain near it; it awakens the disgust of all who look at it. They hurry it out of the house and bury it under the ground; and then happens what Holy Writ says: "For when a man dies, he shall inherit serpents and beasts and worms;" (Eccl. x.) and at last it will be reduced to dust and ashes. Is it possible that one can know and believe this, and

yet forfeit heaven for the love of so perishable a body? And if you take pride in your own beauty, think how you will look in a short time. Your body will not fare better than the corpse of the beautiful empress. Worms will devour it. How blindly do you therefore act, if you are now more anxious for its beauty and comfort, than for your immortal soul. Ah! determine, after the example of St. Francis, to be more concerned for your salvation. Resolve to serve God constantly, and with more

zeal. "Why are you so solicitous to indulge, to adorn your body, which, in a few days, will be the food of worms? Why do you give so little care to the welfare and beauty of your soul, which must appear before the Lord, your God?" asks St. Bernard. "Consider well, that your body, which you nourish now with delicious food, will shortly be food for worms, and the stench of it will be so much more horrible," says St. Peter Damian.

ELEVENTH DAY OF OCTOBER.

ST. LOUIS BERTRAND, CONFESSOR.

St. Louis Bertrand, whose name is recorded in the Roman Martyrology, on the ninth of this month, was born at Valencia, in Spain, in the year 1526. He manifested, already in his childhood, signs of his future holiness; for, from his seventh year, he daily recited the Office of the Blessed Virgin; evinced great pleasure in going to Church; eat nothing from morning to mid-day; obeyed his parents implicitly; showed no taste for childish amusements, but sought and loved solitude, and occupied himself in prayer, study, and spiritual reading. When older, he fled secretly into the desert, that he might give himself entirely to prayer and mortification. His father brought him home again, but could not prevent his entering into the Dominican Order, where he made such progress in virtue and sanctity, that after seven years he was made instructor of novices,—a function he most carefully attended to. Sometimes he was sent into other cities to preach the Gospel, and his missions always resulted in the conversion of many souls. God had bestowed upon him the gift of looking into the innermost heart, and of foretelling future events, which aided him greatly in reforming sinners. Thus, he one day met a shepherd, to whom he said: "Dear friend, I know that you are in a bad condition: it is three years since you made a good confession. If you value your salvation, delay no longer to atone for your faults, for death is near you. I am ready to absolve

you." The shepherd, greatly disturbed at first, soon recognized God's mercy in the exhortation of St. Louis, confessed his sins with repentance, and died three days afterwards.

In 1562, St. Louis went, with other priests, to the West Indies, desiring to win souls for Christ, and to give his life for his faith. How zealously he administered his apostolic functions, no pen can describe. He occupied the whole day in preaching and instructing without ever becoming weary, and without omitting the many and austere penances he had practised from his youth. The number of the infidels whom he converted was very great, and is known only to the Almighty, who guarded him in all dangers, and wrought many miracles through him. It is known that, although he preached in one language only, yet he was understood by people who spoke in different tongues. Several times the heathen tried to poison him, — to put a stop to his converting so many, — but God prevented His faithful servant from being mortally harmed. A nobleman took, as meant especially for himself, a sermon in which the Saint had severely inveighed against a certain vice, and in consequence resolved to shoot him. He had already levelled the weapon, when the Saint, perceiving it, made the sign of the Cross; and the nobleman, instead of his weapon, held a crucifix in his hand. Moved to repentance by this miracle, he fell at the feet of St. Louis, and begged pardon. At another time, some savages were about to stone him; but he spoke so kindly to them that he completely won them, and they desired him to instruct them in the Christian faith. One day, a heathen was about to kill him with an axe; but, as he struck, God caused the axe to glide from the Saint's head, without in the least injuring him, and bury itself deep in the ground. Many similar examples of the protection of Divine Providence are to be found in the Saint's history.

Having labored several years with untiring zeal in the conversion of the infidels, he was recalled to Europe. During the voyage, he calmed a terrific storm by the sign of the Holy Cross. The rest of his days he passed in the administration of several offices which obedience had laid upon his shoulders, until he departed this life by a holy death, in his 55th year on the 9th of October, as he himself had prophesied. No one doubted that the many and great hardships which he had undergone while in the West Indies, converting the heathen, as well as the severity that he had used towards himself, had shortened his days. Before he died, God visited him with several maladies, all of which he suffered with wonderful patience. Although he had cured many sick by a certain prayer of St. Vincent Ferrer

he would not make use of it for himself, but often called on God in the words of St. Augustine: "Lord! here burn, here cut; but spare me in eternity!" He was sorry when he saw that they took so much trouble to relieve his sufferings, — partly because he deemed himself unworthy of so much care, and partly because he submitted entirely to the Divine will, saying: "Let us leave God to work after His own good pleasure. His will be done." His humility was as wonderful as his patience. He thought himself the greatest sinner, while others regarded him the greatest Saint of his time. His maxim was to despise himself, but no one else; to despise the world, but not to care if the world despises us. He was greatly distressed, and generally went away when he was praised. But one day, when some noblemen abused him as the most wicked of all men, he listened to them quietly, and at last said: "What you have said, gentlemen, is true: you know me better than others do." When some one praised him on account of the many miracles he wrought, he said: "Do you regard this as a sign of holiness? If so, you are mistaken: it is only the result of faith. Oh! how much greater power and gifts did Lucifer receive, and yet he went to destruction." His purity he kept unspotted to the last, by means of prayer and constant mortification. More than once he had to fight hard for it. One day, a wicked person hired an unchaste woman to tempt the Saint to evil; but taking his girdle, St. Louis whipped her so long, with all his strength, that she was glad to run away. How shall I worthily praise all the other virtues that the Saint possessed? Especially great was his love of prayer, and his constant union with God. Every forenoon he passed two hours in prayer, and as many in the afternoon, but with such ardor that he was often found raised above the ground, or surrounded by bright rays. During the day, he frequently raised his heart to God in devout exclamations. By prayer, he nourished and increased his burning love of God and man. Nothing gave him more pain than when he saw or heard God offended, and nothing caused him greater joy than to see or hear anything done in honor of the Almighty. One day, he offered to God his own life for the preservation of that of another zealous missionary, who labored very successfully for the salvation of men. Notwithstanding these and other heroic virtues, he was continually tormented by the fear of being eternally lost. His whole body sometimes trembled at the thought of it; and, when they would encourage him by reason of the good he had done, he would answer, sighing deeply: "Ah! much more good have others done; many more graces have they received than I, miserable man that I am: and yet a Lucifer, a

Judas, have been condemned with so many others. How terrible would it be, if such a misfortune should happen to me! O misery of miseries! How is it possible that a sane man should be free from fear, having no security to escape punishment!" He was often heard to say: "O God! how shall I be able to justify my whole life before Thee, — I, who have not the courage to give an account of one single day: nay, even of one hour! O great justice of God! O human weakness! How is it possible to think of this without fear?" Shortly before his end, he said sorrowfully to the religious who were present: "Oh! pray for me, for I may still be condemned." This fear made St. Louis very careful to avoid all danger of committing sin. It caused him also to persevere in his penances, and incited him to do good. When some one perceived, during the Saint's last illness, that he had a heavy stone lying upon his breast, and said to him: "Why, reverend brother, do you wish to give still more pain to your emaciated and suffering body?" the Saint replied: "My father, what else can I do? Death is so near, and heaven suffers violence." The holy man desired until his end to labor, fight and suffer for heaven. But at last the love of God conquered fear in the heart of the dying Saint, and his last moments were marked by the fullest and calmest confidence. His soul, at its departure from earth, was seen by many to ascend into heaven, beaming with divine radiance, and accompanied by a large number of holy Angels. Countless miracles which took place at the touch of his body, which exhaled the most fragrant odor, or by his intercession, manifested to the world the glory he enjoyed in heaven.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. "Death is near; and heaven suffers violence." Thus spoke the Saint to those who would persuade him to discontinue his voluntary penance. These two points should restrain us from evil and incite us to good, especially to penance and mortification. Death is near, and you have but a short time in which you can work out your salvation. It is not long before you must appear before a Judge, who will sentence you for all eternity. Oh, do not offend this Judge; as, otherwise, what have you to expect? Neglect not the short time left to

you. When death opens the door of eternity, not a moment will be left to you to work for your salvation. How sorry will you then be, when you think: "I have had time, opportunity and means to work out my salvation; but I have not improved them. Now, I have neither time, opportunity nor means to work out my salvation." Death is so near, and heaven suffers violence. By an easy and sensual, or an idle and luxurious life, one cannot go into heaven. Violence must be used; penances, interior and exterior mortifications; self-restraint

must be employed if one would enter heaven, to which crosses, sufferings and uninterrupted penances led so many holy martyrs and confessors.

II. St. Louis, after so severe and holy a life, yet feared to be condemned. What is the reason that you, leading an idle or even sinful life, have no fear, as if you were in no danger of being condemned? There is no day in which you cannot say with truth: "To-day I may be damned." For, either you are in mortal sin or not. If you are, who can assure you that you may not die at any hour and be condemned? If you are not in mortal sin, tell me, where is the day in which you may not become guilty of it, and, dying in it, go to never-ending punishment? See, then, how near you are to hell. But can it be that you believe this, and yet live without fear, or as if you felt quite secure? Fear, then, but fear in the same spirit in which St.

Louis feared. This fear incited him to use those means which he knew were necessary and useful to escape hell. In the same manner do you fear. Should you, therefore, be in mortal sin, tear yourself away from it, and do penance. And if you are free from sin, take care that you do not become guilty of it. Pray daily to God in your morning prayer, that He may protect you and guard you from all sin, that you may not die in it and go to perdition. Fear the Almighty, who alone has power to condemn you. To fear Him rightly, is not to offend Him. Should you have offended Him, reconcile yourself with Him without delay, by true penance. "Fear the Lord and keep his commandments." (Eccl. xiii.) "He that feareth God, neglecteth nothing;" (Eccl. xiii.) nothing that is necessary to appease Him; nothing that is necessary to escape hell.

TWELFTH DAY OF OCTOBER.

ST. PELAGIA, PENITENT.

The life of St. Pelagia teaches us how true it is that the hearing of a single sermon often changes one's whole life and leads to penitence and salvation. Pelagia was born of heathen parents and lived at Antioch, in the time of Theodosius the younger. Having been brought up from childhood in wickedness, her conduct, on arriving at womanhood, was such as to give scandal to all honest people in the city. Maximian, the Patriarch of Antioch, one day, had a Council of Bishops, among whom was Nonnus, Bishop of Edessa, celebrated for his virtue and holiness. When this holy man was addressing the people in the vestibule of the temple, Pelagia passed, sitting on a mule, and clad in most luxurious garments, her head, neck and arms glittering with jewels. The assembled bishops turned away their eyes and sigh-

ed over the blindness and wickedness of this sinner. St. Nonnus fixed his eyes on her as long as she was in sight. After the sermon, he asked the bishops how they had liked the magnificent appearance of the woman. The bishops, rather surprised at this unexpected question, were silent. St. Nonnus said: "The sight of her has deeply touched me; for, how shall we be able to justify ourselves if our labor and our zeal are compared with hers? How much time does she employ to adorn herself in order to appear well in the eyes of men and tempt them! And what are we doing to cleanse our souls from sin and adorn them in such a manner that we may please the Almighty?" Having said this, he returned with his deacon to his lodgings, locked himself in his room, threw himself upon the floor, beat his breast, and begged God to forgive him, that he, a priest and bishop, had not employed as much time and labor to adorn his soul with virtues, as Pelagia had done to beautify her body.

He dreamed the following night that he caught a black dove, which, soiled and covered with dust, was flying hither and thither. He cast her into the water, out of which she rose snow-white, and flew away. The meaning of this dream became clear to him on the following day. It was Sunday, and St. Nonnus again preached to the people, but in the church. The subject was the last day, when God will judge the good and the wicked. During the sermon, Pelagia, came into the church, not impelled by eagerness to learn, for she hated the Christians and their teachings, but tempted by curiosity and the desire to lay snares for others. But the words of truth, spoken by the bishop from the pulpit, so deeply touched the heart of the woman, that she began to weep bitterly at the thought of the life she was leading. Hardly was the sermon ended, when Pelagia, returning home with a penitent heart, wrote to the holy bishop, most earnestly begging him to instruct her in the Christian faith and to baptize her. The bishop, fearing that this might only be a deceit, to which the Evil One had tempted her, answered that she should not dare come to him with words she did not mean; further, that although he was only a sinner, he was a servant of Christ, to whom all hearts were laid open; if she, however, desired earnestly to change her life, she should come, not to his house, but to the church, where he would be on the following day, with the other bishops.

Pelagia went into the church, threw herself at the feet of St. Nonnus in the presence of all the other bishops, and openly confessing her former sinful life, she begged, with tears, to be baptized, that she might obtain forgiveness of her sins. St. Nonnus was willing to grant her desire, but asked her if she knew any

one who would be security for her, that she would not return to her former sinful life, as this was necessary according to the rules of the church. Pelagia was greatly distressed at this question, as she well knew that she could find no one willing to be security for her. She therefore assured him most solemnly, that she was determined never again to return to her former life, but earnestly to do penance during the remainder of her life. She repeated her request to be received through holy baptism into the Christian Church, that she might be released from the burden of her sins. The assembled bishops, in consideration of the true repentance which she manifested, acquiesced in her wish and baptized her, after she had been instructed, and then gave her in charge of a pious widow named Romana.

Pelagia immediately began a penitential and holy life. She cut off her hair, laid aside all jewels and luxurious dresses, gave all she possessed to the poor, dismissed her servants with wholesome admonitions, mortified her body with fasting, scourging and rough hair-cloth, and daily shed many bitter tears for her former sins. The bishops and all the Christian inhabitants of the city rejoiced greatly at so astonishing a conversion. Satan, however, could not endure that so useful a tool for the destruction of souls should be taken from him. Hence, he tormented her day and night, either with the remembrance of her past life, or with the most horrible temptations. He even appeared to her visibly and tempted her with flattery, caresses and promises, to return to her former sins. Pelagia resisted him with fortitude, arming herself, in accordance with the instructions of St. Nonnus, with the sign of the holy cross, and by this means drove Satan away. On the eighth day after she had received holy baptism, she attired herself in a penitential robe, and left the city with the knowledge of St. Nonnus. Under the name of Pelagius, she went to Jerusalem, visited with great devotion the holy places, and selected a place upon Mount Olivet, where she built a small hut, in which she passed the remainder of her life in repenting of her sins, in meditating upon the passion and death of Jesus Christ, and in the practice of severe penances. Although she endeavored to live concealed from the eyes of the world, the fame of her virtues spread through the surrounding country, and every one spoke of the virtues and holiness of the hermit Pelagius. After the lapse of three years, James, a deacon of the holy bishop Nonnus, desired to visit the Holy Land. Nonnus gave him permission to make the pilgrimage, and told him to enquire for the hermit Pelagius, and if he found her, to tell her that the bishop wished to be remembered to her. The deacon did as requested, and being informed where the hermit

lived, he went to the hut, and desired admittance, saying that he had a message from Bishop Nonnus. Pelagia opened the small window of her little dwelling and immediately recognized the deacon. He, however, did not recognize her, as fasting and weeping had changed her features. When she had received the greeting of the Saint, she said: "The bishop is a holy man, and I commend myself to his prayers." After these words she closed the window, and James went away, not without indignation at being treated in so discourteous a manner. But, while visiting the holy places, he heard so much in praise of the hermit Pelagius, that he determined to visit him once more on his return. Hence, he went again and knocked at the door, but not a sound from within told that he had been heard. Not knowing what to think of this, he opened the small window and looked in to ascertain if Pelagius was absent or sick. He was neither absent nor sick: but was lying on the floor of his small dwelling—dead. James announced this in Jerusalem, and called the monks of the neighborhood and some priests to bury the hermit. All present praised God, who had been so wonderful in this weak woman, when St. Nonnus, who had been informed of Pelagia's death, made known who this hermit had been, how heroically she had overcome herself to lead so austere a life. The holy body was buried with great honors, and God wrought many miracles by it. But the conversion of Pelagia and her constancy in expiating her former sinful conduct is certainly the greatest miracle which God wrought by her; as of thousands who are addicted to the vice of unchastity, and who have lived long in it, hardly one reforms thoroughly, or remains constant until the end; especially if the evil spirit tempts him as violently as he did the penitent Pelagia.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. St. Nonnus was deeply moved and wept bitterly at the thought that Pelagia, the sinner, was more anxious for the adornment of her body, than he was for that of his soul. Have you not much more reason to weep, when your conscience tells you that you are much more concerned for your mortal body than for your immortal soul? Manifest in future, at least as much care for your soul as for your body, although the former deserves much greater solicitude than the latter. You procure for</p>	<p>your body nourishment to keep it strong and healthy; when it is soiled, you wash and cleanse it; when it is sick, you immediately make use of remedies to restore its health. And what would you not do could you keep death away? Have the same care for your soul. The Holy Sacraments and the word of God are the food of your soul. Procure these for it; hear frequently the word of God, and receive the Sacraments with devotion. When you have been guilty of sin, your soul is unclean; when</p>
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you live in mortal sin, your soul is sick, nay even dead in a spiritual sense. Hasten to free it from sickness and death by true repentance. Can I ask less of you? Or is it not your duty to take care of your priceless soul? "Why do we not take as much care of our soul as of our body?" asks St. Chrysostom.

II. Pelagia, the great sinner, heard a single sermon, and that through curiosity, or even a more sinful motive; and yet, she became acquainted with the danger in which she stood; she was converted to the true faith; she practised austere penance and gained life everlasting. If she had not heard the sermon, she would probably have remained in her sins, and thus have lost salvation. Oh! how many, in these times, live in mortal sin, who, if they listened to the word of God, would surely reform and save their souls. But because they neglect this, they continue in their sins and go to perdition. To whom can they trace the cause of their condemnation but to themselves? Take heed that you do not increase the number of these unfortunates. Hear the word of God frequently and with devotion. If you are in sin, it will surely lead to your conversion. If you are not in sin, it will help you to remain faithful. But understand this well: as soon

as Pelagia recognized the danger in which she stood, she did penance and continued in it until her end. If God makes you acquainted with the danger in which you are, do not delay your conversion from day to day; for God, who promises you pardon if you repent, does not promise you the morrow for penance. Determine upon it to-day. "To-morrow is an uncertain day, and who knows whether you will live until then? Many die suddenly; for, the Son of Man comes at an hour when he is least expected," says the pious Thomas à Kempis. Pelagia was persuaded to do penance by a sermon on the Last Judgment. Oh! that you also would deeply meditate on the important truth: God will one day be my Judge. He will sentence me for all eternity. And what God? The same whom I now so often and so rashly offend. Can I, therefore, reasonably expect a judgment in my favor? Consider these truths seriously, that they may lead you to true penance; for by penance alone can you turn aside the wrath of God, and obtain the grace of a favorable sentence. "If we believe that we must one day appear before the judgment-seat of God, let us endeavor to appease the great Lord of Creation, without delay, by true penance," writes Origen.

THIRTEENTH DAY OF OCTOBER.

ST. EDWARD, KING AND CONFESSOR, AND ST. GUMMARUS, CONFESSOR.

St. Edward III., grandson of the holy King and Martyr, Edward, was born in England, but educated in Normandy, by his maternal uncle, as the Danes had conquered and devastated England. In the midst of the sensuality of the world and the

temptations to all possible frivolities, Edward, while still very young, endeavored to lead so retired and innocent a life, that he was admired by all, and was called the Angel of the court. He took no pleasure in those amusements in which young princes generally delight, but found his greatest joy in prayer and study. His devotion at Church during holy Mass was truly wonderful; and no time spent there seemed to him too long. He had the greatest horror for everything that was in the least contrary to angelical chastity. No immodest word ever passed his lips, and none was ever uttered in his presence without being severely censured by him. The long absence from his home and kingdom he bore with the most admirable patience, and when, one day, some courtiers said to him that he must regain his kingdom by force of arms, he said, that he did not desire a crown which must be won by shedding blood. But when the Danes had been driven from English soil, and peace restored throughout the land, the nobility recalled Edward from exile and placed him upon the throne. The new King bestowed his first care on the restoration of the prosperity of the kingdom, and to this end, he endeavored to revive the worship of the true God and to reform the corrupted morals of his subjects. The revenues taken from the church were restored to it; churches were repaired or rebuilt, together with many monasteries for religious men and women, whose duty it would be to restore the old religion and the fear of God throughout the land; for he used to say: "The most efficacious means to secure the happiness of a country is religion and the fear of God: for the well-being of a state depends mostly on the prosperity of its Church." The nobility demanded that Edward should marry, that the kingdom might not be left without an heir to the throne. Edward, who had already made a vow of perpetual chastity, but was unwilling to reveal it, consented to their wish, and married Edith, the daughter of Count Godwin, but lived in continency until his end.

To his subjects he was a most perfect model of all Christian virtues, and cared for their well-being like a tender father. He manifested special love to the poor and the orphans, whence he received the glorious title of Guardian of the orphans and Father of the poor. He was a wise and just administrator, gave every one free access to him, and allowed no one to depart without relief. His leisure hours were spent in prayer and works of charity. He was never better satisfied than when he had almost emptied the royal treasury into the hands of the poor. Once, during holy Mass, at which he daily assisted with great devotion, he had the happiness of seeing our Lord in a most beautiful form surrounded by heavenly brightness. On Pentecost-day, God

revealed to him, during holy Mass, that the king of Denmark, who intended to invade England, and who was already on sea, had perished. One day, while on his way to Church, he met a poor paralytic man, who was creeping slowly to the sacred edifice. The holy king took him upon his shoulders, and carried him thus into the house of God. This admirable work of charity God rewarded by immediately bestowing health upon the poor paralytic.

Besides the Queen of Heaven, the holy king specially honored St. John, as it is known that the latter lived always in chastity. In honor of this Saint, the king had made a vow to refuse nothing which should be asked of him in the holy Apostle's name. It happened that St. John himself appeared to him in the form of a beggar. The king, having no money about him, took a ring from his finger, and gave it to the beggar. Some days afterwards, St. John appeared to two pilgrims and gave them the ring, with the request that they would take it to the king and tell him that he would die in six months, and be led into heaven by the holy Apostle. The king received this message joyfully, ordered prayers throughout the kingdom for himself and redoubled his works of charity and devotion. On the day appointed to him, after a short illness, and having devoutly received the holy Sacraments, he gave his spotless soul into the hands of his Creator, in the 36th year of his age, in 1066. Thirty-six years after his death, his holy body was exhumed and was found entirely incorrupt, while it exhaled so delicious a fragrance, that all who were present greatly rejoiced.



To the life of St. Edward, we will add a short sketch of St. Gummarus, a nobleman of Brabant, who was born near Lierre, in the province of Antwerp. His parents, much against his inclinations, brought him early to the court of king Pepin. The love and fear of God had taken such root in his heart, that he preserved his innocence and purity inviolate through many dangers. He was polite and kind to every one, but so careful in all he said, that he never uttered a frivolous or impure word. Neither could he suffer others to make use of such words in his presence. The King was so much pleased with the pious conduct of the youth, that he gave him the hand of a lady of high nobility, but who, unfortunately, possessed no other qualities to entitle her to the love of her virtuous husband. After some years, Gummarus was obliged to go to the wars, and left to his wife the care of his household and estates. The wicked woman

treated the servants and the people upon the estate with great cruelty. Some were sent away without sufficient cause, others were oppressed with work. Others were driven from their homes and were forced to draw the plow with their own hands, or they were yoked, instead of oxen, to carts and wagons. When Gummarus after the war was ended, returned home, and was informed of the conduct of his wife, he earnestly reproved her and endeavored to atone for the wrong she had done. He restored to all what had been taken from them, and thus brought his affairs into order.

On other occasions also, he manifested to his people a compassionate and truly fatherly heart. One day the reapers were in the fields cutting the corn. His wife, who had taken upon herself to superintend the harvest, kept them at their work with too great eagerness. She would not even permit the mowers to go to the spring to allay their thirst during the heat of the day. The pious Gummarus came to the field at this time, and when he heard how his wife had treated the reapers, he reprimanded her sharply, and then miraculously procured the desired water for the thirsty workmen. He dug with his staff in the ground, and suddenly a bright cool stream gushed forth, which gave new strength to the exhausted laborers. This spring still exists, and is shown as a sign of St. Gummarus' love and care for those under him: he was not less kind to his wicked spouse. She was taken sick in the field, as a punishment of her cruelty. She had overheated herself in her eagerness to drive the people to work, and was carried home. When she had been laid on the bed, she became so thirsty, that she thought her entrails were on fire. She endeavored to allay her thirst with water; but the more she drank, the more thirsty she became. This punishment opened her eyes, and she acknowledged her wickedness towards the poor laborers in the field. Hence she sent hastily to her pious husband, begging him humbly, that as he had shown compassion on the poor reapers and so miraculously allayed their thirst, he would also have pity upon her, and by his prayers, end the fire which was consuming her, as otherwise she must surely die. The holy Gummarus said a short prayer and made the sign of the Cross over her; and thus she was immediately relieved of her interior heat and immoderate thirst.

Many similar miracles were wrought by this compassionate Saint for the welfare of his neighbors, as he constantly endeavored to assist others both in spiritual and temporal necessities. In bearing the many crimes of his spouse he evinced heroic patience, and endeavored, as well by example as by exhortations, to lead her to the path of a Christian life, to which end he also

offered many fervent prayers to the Almighty. His greatest pleasure consisted in prayer and devout discourse. At that period there lived a man named Rumold, who was famed for his holiness. To him St. Gummarus went frequently, in order to animate himself in his zeal to serve God, by pious discourses. Sometimes he put aside all temporal affairs and retired for several days, to pray and meditate, on a small island, where, following the direction of an Angel, he had built a Church. After living thus for many years in the practice of piety, in doing good to men, and carefully observing all the obligations imposed upon him by his station, he fell into a severe illness, which he gratefully received from God's hand, and bore with wonderful patience, until, having received the holy Sacraments, he gave up his soul to Him whom he had so faithfully served during life. His holy body was at first buried at the place of his birth, but afterwards it was removed to the Church, which, as was said above, he had built on the island. During the ceremonies which took place when the relics of the Saint were removed, God honored him with many miracles. God grant that all Christian masters may follow the example of St. Gummarus in kindness to their domestics!

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Edward received the message of his death joyfully. This should not surprise any one: as the holy king had performed, during his life, a great many noble and kind deeds, which would accompany him before the Judgment-seat of the Most High. In consequence of these, he had reason to expect the reward promised by the Saviour. He could say with the Apostle: "There is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge, will render to me in that day." (II. Tim. iv.) He hoped to obtain this crown after his death; hence he received the announcement of it with joy. Consider here, my dear reader, an important truth, taken from Holy Writ. God will judge and sentence every man according to his works. The works which have been done during life follow us, the good as well as the evil, to the judgment-seat of God. "For, their works follow them:" says Holy Writ (Apoc. xvi.) "That

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for which man commits sin," says St. Augustine, "remains; man must leave it: but the sin he carries with him." His sins shall bear witness against him, and say, as St. Bernard writes: "We are thy works; thou hast created us." The same may be said of the good works which accompany the just to comfort him. "We are thy works: thou hast created us," they will say. "At the Judgment-seat of the Almighty," writes St. Gaudentius, it will not be said: Behold the man and his nobility, his beauty, honor, riches, or power; but, as it is written: Behold the man and his works. If a man comes with many evil deeds to the Judgment-seat, he will have nothing to expect but a terrible sentence. If, however, he can show good works and many virtues, he will be called to receive the recompense which Christ has promised for such works and such virtues. "Every man will receive according to his works." (Rom. ii.) "If you wish to die happily and be

able to justify yourself before the Judgment-seat of the Almighty, perform now, while time is left to you, good works, and practise virtue. The dying receive great comfort and hope from their contempt of the world, their eager desire to improve in virtue, from the practice of penance, voluntary obedience, mortification, crosses and trials borne patiently for the love of Christ." Thus writes the pious Thomas à Kempis; and he adds the following exhortation: "Endeavor so to live, that you may rejoice and not fear when your last hour comes."

II. The lips of St. Gummarus were never soiled with an impure word; neither did he allow others to make use of such words in his presence. The same thing is also especially noted in the life of the chaste and holy king Edward. Thus act the lovers of chastity. No impure word passes their lips, neither do they allow others to speak obscenely in their presence, or relate stories which make the innocent blush. He, who laughs at such speeches or stories, and likes to hear them, or perhaps even dares to make such unchaste jests himself, cannot say that he is a lover of chastity, or that he has a pure heart. I do not believe it, and will never believe it. "As the heart is," says St. Chrysostom, "so are the words on the lips." Our words tell the state of the heart. Christ Himself clearly confirms this: "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh. A good man, out of a good treasure, bringeth forth good things: and an evil man, out of an evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." (Matth. xii.) Those who have a chaste heart, have not frivolous or unclean tongues. But if the tongue of a man is impure and obscene, then, according to the words

of Christ, his heart is in the same condition. "If any one has an impure breath," writes Albertus Magnus, "it is a sign that either his lungs, liver, or stomach is disordered: thus, also, it is a sure sign, that a man is disordered, sick, or impure of soul, if he utters impure words." If you would show that you possess a chaste heart and are a lover of purity, never let an unchaste word pass your lips. Do not permit any one to speak obscenely in your presence. Prevent all such speeches as much as it is in your power. Seek not voluntarily the company of those who are wanton and immodest in their speech, nor remain with them. Do not laugh thoughtlessly at such words, but show a decided displeasure. Laughing is no sign of displeasure, but on the contrary of rejoicing and approval. Those who use impure language, if they see you laugh, will judge that you are pleased to hear them, and will be encouraged to be still more obscene. Hence you make yourself a partaker of the sin of others. Therefore endeavor to do just the contrary; abstaining from all laughter and manifest a decided displeasure, and if possible, go away and avoid such people. The stench of the words which they utter may remind you of what the Gospel says about the Last Judgment, when "the goats" shall be placed at the left hand of the divine Judge. If you do not wish to be then accounted among them, frequent not their society now. "For," as St. Bernard says, "Vain, frivolous, impure speeches contaminate man to such a degree, that he soon likes to say and do what he likes to listen to;" that is to say, he will soon be morally like a goat, and hence, on the last day, he will stand on the left side of the Great Judge.

FOURTEENTH DAY OF OCTOBER.

ST. BURCHARD, BISHOP.

Burchard, first Bishop of Wurzburg, was born in England, of noble and very pious parents. The signs of his future holiness were already perceptible in early childhood. Nothing of what generally delights children gave him any pleasure. Praying and visiting the churches were his only joy. When he was old enough to study, it was observed that he was unwearied in his industry to acquire all that knowledge which in time might serve him to labor for the honor of God and the salvation of souls. Not less was he solicitous to preserve his purity of body and soul among the many dangers which he could not avoid. He had not the least desire to obtain temporal honors or possessions; all his thoughts being directed to one end—to serve God and to further His honor. For this reason he left his home when he had completed his studies, and went, unknown, as a pilgrim, to France.

St. Boniface, the great apostle of Germany, was at that period looking for some men, well armed with virtue and knowledge, to assist him in laboring in the vineyard of the Lord; as he alone was unable to convert the heathen in Germany, and preserve the newly converted in the true faith. Burchard, when informed of this, went immediately to the Saint, and humbly requested to be received among the number of his spiritual laborers, as he desired nothing more earnestly than to have an opportunity to work for the salvation of souls. St. Boniface received Burchard with joy, and having become acquainted with his great virtues and learning, he made him his travelling companion when he went to Rome to Pope Zachary, with whom he had to arrange important affairs for the continuation of his apostolic work in Germany. The Pope, at the request of St. Boniface, consecrated Burchard bishop, and ordered him to make Wurzburg his see. Although Burchard refused to accept so high a dignity, and protested, on his knees and with a flood of tears, that he was unworthy of it, he was at last forced to obey Divine Providence. Having returned to Germany with St. Boniface, he was introduced to the inhabitants of Wurzburg as their bishop. The newly converted received him with joy, and Burchard administered the affairs of the church entrusted to him with apostolic zeal. To the heathens, who were still there, he represented the

truth of the Christian faith so forcibly that they soon abandoned idolatry and joined the faithful. He carefully instructed the converts how to order their lives in accordance with the Christian faith, and how to avoid sin, as otherwise the true faith would not lead them to salvation, but increase their responsibilities and punishment. He prayed daily to the Almighty, as the Author of the true faith, to give him strength to attain the end and aim of all his endeavors. His blameless life gave great power to his words, and God blessed his labor. He was very severe towards himself, and chastised his body by fasting and other penances; but towards the poor and forsaken he always manifested great compassion and charity. All were received by him with kindness and gentleness, which failed not to win all hearts. The slanders of some ill-disposed persons he did not regard, but consoled himself with his good conscience. He hated all pride and magnificence. Hence he did not use a crozier glittering with gold and silver, but a reed from an alder-bush, which, after his death, was laid in the coffin beside his holy body, as a proof of his humility. But the more the holy bishop humbled himself, the greater became his influence, which gave him many opportunities for disseminating the Christian faith. During the second year of his episcopate he conceived the idea of taking up the bodies of St. Kilian and his companions, and placing them in a splendid tomb. After having prepared himself by prayer and fasting, he went, with all the clergy and a multitude of people, to the place where it was believed that the holy relics were reposing. There he took a shovel and began to remove the earth which covered them; others followed his example, and they continued the work until the bodies were found. The whole air was pervaded by a sweet odor when the coffins were opened, and God honored the saints still more by many miracles which were wrought on the sick. From that hour the faithful began to venerate St. Kilian and his companions, who had shed their blood for the true faith. St. Burchard continued to discharge his functions with untiring vigilance, until, after forty years, he felt that death was no longer far away. He therefore requested permission to retire from his see, and spend the few remaining days of his life in preparing himself, in a quiet retreat, for a happy end. Having received this permission, he called the people together in the church, exhorted them to perseverance in their faith, blessed them, and then went, with six religious, to the village of Hohenburg, where he remained until God called him, in 790, or, as others say, in 791, to a better life. His holy body was conveyed to Wurzburg, and God made His faithful servant known throughout the whole Christian world by many miracles.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

St. Burchard was not content with converting the heathen to the true faith, but he taught them also how to live in accordance with its doctrines, as otherwise their faith would not save them. You are, by the grace of God, in the true faith, if you are really a Catholic. This, however, does not insure your salvation. You must live according to the rules of the true faith, obey the commandments, avoid all sin, and constantly practise good works. I say, avoid *all* sin. There are persons who, refraining from some sin, or observing some of the commandments, promise themselves salvation, although they are the slaves of some vice, or transgress wantonly some of the commandments. This is a great error. It is a deceit of Satan. Christ has emphatically told His disciples, that they must observe *all* the commandments. (Matth. viii.) "All," said He, not merely this and that. Hence, we are obliged to avoid all sin. St. Mark relates of King Herod, that he observed a great part of what John had preached; (Mark, vi.) but this was not enough for his salvation; he ought to have kept all the commandments; he ought to have avoided all vices. Not having done this, everything else that he did could not open the gate of heaven for him. Unchastity alone was enough to condemn him. "The devil does not care that you lock the door to all other sins, so long as you allow a single sin to enter," says St. Gregory. In like manner writes St. James of Nisibis: "It does not grieve the devil that you keep nine commandments of the Lord, so long as you break the tenth;" just as the enemy who besieges a city is not much distressed that all

other places are well fortified, so long as one place is not fortified and without guards. Examine yourself whether you have not until now been in a similar condition, and take measures to reform in time.

II. The holy bishop heeded not the slanders of his enemies, but consoled himself with his good conscience. You are immoderately sad or indignant when you hear that evil is spoken of you, or when you are reproached with vices. What avails your sadness or indignation? Of what use to you are the invectives, the blasphemies, the curses which you utter? You lose all the merit which otherwise you might gain, and besides this, you become guilty of great sin. If you are reproached with faults which are true, correct them; if not true, console yourself with your good conscience. St. Gregory says: "What does it avail when men praise us and our own conscience accuses us? Or how can we be sad when everybody accuses us, and our own conscience acquits us? If we have a witness in heaven and another in our own heart, let the fools say what they like." St. Augustine says: "Think of Augustine as you please; say of him, judge him as you like; if only my own conscience accuses me not." A modest defense of your honor is not forbidden you; but cursing these who speak evil of you, abusing them, bearing enmity towards them, desiring to take revenge, these are most assuredly forbidden to you. Experience shows, also, that generally more good is done by patient silence, than by much opposition. "A malignant person," says St. Chrysostom, "is more

easily conquered when you are silent, than when you answer much. Wickedness only increases when one talks and defends himself too much." Hence, suffer and be silent.	Offer the wrong done to you to the Almighty ; and this will be more useful to you, and more meritorious than murmurs, complaints or abuse.
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FIFTEENTH DAY OF OCTOBER.

ST. TERESA, VIRGIN.

St. Teresa, so greatly gifted by the Almighty, was born in 1515, at Avila, in Spain, of not less pious than noble parents. Among other devout exercises, her parents were accustomed frequently to read pious books, and their daughter was taught to do the same as soon as she was able to read. Teresa soon became so much attached to this that she often retired with her brother Roderick to a solitary place, in order to read more undisturbed. Though scarcely seven years of age she thus obtained so vivid a knowledge as well of temporal as of spiritual things that she sometimes would exclaim, as if in ecstasy: "O Eternity! O Eternity! To be tormented during a whole eternity! To rejoice during a whole eternity! To be without end in pain! To be without end in joy! Oh, who can find words for it?" Whilst she read the lives of the Saints, her heart became so inflamed with the desire to die for the honor of Christ, that, in company with Roderick, she secretly left her father's home, intending to go to Africa to preach Christ among the Saracens, and thus earn the glorious crown of martyrdom. Although the two young adventurers were immediately pursued and brought back to their parents, yet the desire to die for Christ could not be torn from Teresa's heart. When, in the twelfth year of her age, she lost her mother by an early death, Teresa cast herself down before an image of the Blessed Virgin, and in a flood of tears, cried out: "Mother of Mercy! I choose thee for my Mother! Take me, a poor orphan, among the number of thy children!" The wonderful protection of the Queen of Heaven, which she enjoyed in the future, proved that her prayer was heard.

Through the natural levity and forgetfulness of childhood, it happened that Teresa, after the death of her mother, gradually left off her devout reading, and instead of it, fell upon worldly books. She also became very intimate with one of her cousins, who was much addicted to vanity. This caused her to grow cold

in her devotion; she no longer found pleasure in prayer, but became idle and vain,—without, however, losing the innocence of her heart. When her pious father became aware of the change, he sent her into an Augustinian convent, where she soon came to the knowledge of her fault, and bitterly repented of it. That she did not fall into greater spiritual danger she always ascribed to the special favor of the Divine Mother. She again began to read devout books, and thus brought back her former pious zeal, which had almost entirely died out, since she had spent so much time in reading romances. Soon after, she became dangerously sick, and her father took her home again. During her illness she recognized more thoroughly than before the vanity of the world, and was filled with an intense desire to leave it entirely and to serve God in the religious state. Her father was greatly opposed to this; but she secretly fled to the convent of the Carmelite Nuns, near Avila. This took place when she was in her twentieth year. But no sooner had she left her father's house, than she felt so ardent a desire to return to it, that she trembled in all her limbs. Looking upon this as a temptation of Satan, she courageously continued her way, and when she had arrived at the Convent, an entire change suddenly took place within her; her sorrow and dread became joy and comfort. Thus did the Almighty recompense her self-control.

Teresa began her noviciate with great zeal, continued in it, and ended by taking upon herself the usual vows. Some time later, however, she once more lost her fervor in the service of God, because she conversed too long and too often with people of the world and thus neglected her prayers and lost her love for devout exercises. One day, going into church to pray, her eyes fell upon a picture of Our Saviour representing Him covered with wounds. At the same moment, her inmost soul was deeply moved by the thought that Christ had suffered so much for her, and that she had hitherto been so ungrateful and disobedient to Him. Her heart became so filled with grief, that it seemed to her as if it would break. Hence, sinking down before the image, she began to weep bitterly over her inconstancy, and said, with the most perfect trust: "Lord, I will not rise from the ground, until Thou hast bestowed sufficient strength on me, not to sin in future, but to serve Thee faithfully and with my whole heart." This short but fervent prayer of Teresa was heard by the Almighty. Her heart was suddenly and forever changed; all affection for human beings was banished from it; her love of God and her delight in prayer and other spiritual exercises renewed, and the resolution taken to continue henceforth in the same. From that hour Teresa vacillated no more in the service

of God, but persevered, with uninterrupted and daily increasing zeal, in the path of virtue and perfection.

God afterwards revealed to her that she owed her conversion to the intercession of St. Joseph and of the Blessed Virgin; hence she sought also to obtain the grace of perseverance by their aid. To this end, she represented frequently to herself the example of St. Magdalen and St. Augustine, and thus animated herself against a relapse. She repented daily most bitterly of the faults of her past life and endeavored to atone for them by wearing rough penitential garments, by scourging herself, and by other penances, although, according to the words of her confessors, she had not been guilty of great sin. One day, God showed her a terrible place in hell, saying that she would have been precipitated into it, if she had continued in her frivolous conversations at the convent-gate with people of the world, and in her neglect of devotional exercises. Her hair stood on end at this revelation, and her eagerness to serve God most faithfully and also to persuade others to do the same, was newly awakened. For this reason, she determined to use all possible means, in order to institute once more the original austerity of the Carmelites, from which, by consent of the spiritual authorities, they had somewhat departed. God Himself inspired her with these thoughts and promised her His aid in the execution of them. But as this was an undertaking which had never yet been attempted by a woman, it is easy to imagine the many and great obstacles she had to overcome. Many of the Clergy and laity opposed her plans, and she was slandered and persecuted on account of them. But notwithstanding this, heaven so visibly assisted her, that, before her death, she counted thirty-two new convents, either of men or of women, in which the religious of her order led a holy life in the observance of all the severity of the original rule. Whoever reflects on the trouble and labor it must have cost St. Teresa to carry out this great enterprise, will not hesitate to pronounce her success a great miracle. It is impossible to describe the great virtues of this holy foundress or the wonderful graces which God bestowed upon her. She possessed among others, the gifts of prophecy and of reading the secrets of the heart. During her prayer, she frequently fell into ecstasy, and was often seen surrounded by a divine light. Once she was heard to exclaim: "Ah! only one God! Only one death! Only one soul!" the explanation of which words she herself gave afterwards, as follows: "There is only one God; if we displease Him, there is no other from whom to seek help. Man dies only once; if therefore his death is unhappy, there is no chance left to remedy the mistake. One soul only do we possess; and if this is lost, there is no hope of salvation."

The visions she had of our Lord, of the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, the holy Angels and other Saints, were almost without number. In the last years of her life, seldom a day passed in which she was not favored with the sight of Christ in the holy Sacrament. The Divine Mother herself instructed, comforted and strengthened her on all occasions. She said of St. Joseph, that she never asked anything of him which she did not obtain. But notwithstanding these and other great graces, her humility was so deep, that she called herself the greatest of sinners, and desired to be considered as such. She often said that she owed it to the especial grace of God that He had not, according to her deserts, precipitated her into hell. She hated all human praise, and it was her greatest delight to be abused, reviled and slandered. She often begged God to withhold His gifts, as she had so often offended Him and made herself unworthy of His grace. Not less wonderful was her patience and desire to suffer. She said, one day, that during forty years she had scarcely been one hour without pain, except at the time when she received Holy Communion, when the interior consolation she felt made her forget her bodily ailments. Incredible almost are the many and severe sicknesses with which she was visited by divine Providence. Among these were violent pains in her side and joints, trembling in all her limbs, disgust of food, and a fever which troubled her for five long years. All these were increased by temptations and spiritual desolation, and also by many and great persecutions. But in all these trials, she never manifested the slightest impatience; on the contrary, she felt an insatiable desire to suffer still more. Hence she was frequently heard to exclaim: "Lord, either to suffer or to die! For, life is too burdensome when I have nothing to suffer." During her maladies she said with Job: "If we have received good things from the hands of the Lord, why should we not also be grateful for that which is evil?" She never manifested any dislike, much less hatred towards those who most unjustly slandered and persecuted her; on the contrary, she showed them a great deal of kindness and endeavored to be useful to them. Hence a certain bishop said: "Whoever wishes to be favored by Teresa, must revile or injure her." She wept bitterly over the blindness of the heretics, and offered many penances for their conversion. She also prescribed in her regulations that the religious of her Order should offer prayers and other good works, in order that God might aid preachers and others who labor for the salvation of souls and the conversion of heretics and sinners. God, one day, showed her the joys of Heaven, saying: "Behold! of what great treasures sinners deprive themselves!" This increased more and more her zeal to further the conversion of sin-

ners. To the poor and sick she was like a tender mother. She offered for the souls of the departed many penances and prayers, thus opening the gates of heaven to a great many of them. In purity of mind and body, she was more an angel than a human being; for besides never having the least fault to reproach herself with in that regard, she had received from God the grace of being free from all unclean thoughts and temptations. Nevertheless she employed all the means which are necessary or useful to preserve purity.

Her other virtues, as her perfect obedience, her extreme poverty, her constant self-abnegation, her wonderful moderation in everything, and her great austerity, must be omitted for want of space; but of her love of God we feel obliged to speak, as in this virtue she seems to have reached the highest point which a human being can attain. And can it be wondered at? She herself saw that an angel pierced her heart with a burning arrow, as a sign of her intense devotion to the Almighty. Christ Himself gave her His hand, saying: "In future shalt thou, as a true spouse, labor zealously for my honor." Nothing grieved her more painfully than when she heard that God, whom she loved so intensely, had been offended by others; and she avoided nothing so carefully as in the least to offend Him. God was constantly in her thoughts even in the midst of her occupations. To Him she constantly raised her heart by short interior prayers, which she sent to heaven with such fervency, that the flames of divine love which burned within her, were reflected on her countenance. The least fault she committed caused her many tears, and she made a vow, not only never to displease God by a voluntary venial sin, and to guard herself against every imperfection, but also constantly to endeavor to do what she knew was most agreeable to the Almighty. The Roman Breviary testifies that she died more from the greatness of her love for the Most High, than from the pains of her sickness.

She knew the hour of her death, eight years before it took place. When she felt it approaching, she wrote a most touching and beautiful letter to all the members of the Convents she had founded, exhorting them to persevere in their fervor. After having most devoutly received the Holy Sacraments, she occupied herself with mental prayer. "At length, the long wished for hour has come, in which I cannot offend Thee any more, O my Lord!" exclaimed she, "the hour in which I shall see Thee." Soon after, she thanked God that she had been born in the Catholic Church, and repeatedly said: "I am a daughter of Thy church, I die a child of the Catholic Church." She was also frequently heard to say: "O Lord! cast me not from Thy face

A contrite and humble heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." Turning on one side, her arms crossed over her breast and pressing a crucifix to her heart, she prayed silently for some time, and calmly expired, in the 68th year of her age, in 1582. Christ visibly appeared to her in her last hour, accompanied by His divine Mother and many Angels. She appeared in great glory to several of her absent friends, at the hour of her death. At the moment when she gave her soul to God, a dead tree, which stood before her cell, began to bud. Her holy body, from which a most delicious odor emanates, has remained incorrupt until this hour; and the relation of the many miracles which took place after her death, fill several books. But what appears most worthy of our admiration in the life of this Saint, is that she, though a weak woman, and almost always afflicted with sickness, could have written many books filled with more than human wisdom; worked so much for the honor of God and the salvation of souls, endured so many persecutions, wrongs and slanders in her holy undertaking; and yet succeeded so well in what she had begun by divine inspiration. God manifested in her, what a feeble human being can do with His aid, and what great works He can perform through feeble hands.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

The whole life of St. Teresa is filled with the most wholesome lessons. Let us point out some of them in a few words:—

I. Teresa began in early youth, after the teachings of her pious parents, to read devout books; from this she first drew the spirit of piety. No sooner, however, had she become interested in reading worldly books, than she grew from day to day more indolent in the service of God; and she returned not to her first fervor, until she had cast aside those works, and again resumed her pious reading: a proof of the great benefit we may derive from devout books, and of the harm which worldly writings may do us. Oh! that those, who desire to live piously, may understand this, and conform their lives to it. Oh! that all Christians would guide their children from

their early youth to the reading of devout books!

II. Teresa, after the death of her mother, chose the Blessed Virgin to be another mother to her, and sought and found in her, comfort and help in all her needs. Through her intercession and that of St. Joseph, she received the grace of being constant in her reform. Love Mary as your mother; seek, with filial trust, consolation and help from her. St. Joseph should be one of your principal patrons, as his intercession is very powerful with the Almighty, and especially as he has now been solemnly declared the Patron Saint of the Universal Church.

III. The sight of the wounded Jesus filled the heart of St. Teresa with great contrition for her former indifferent life; it inflamed her with true love of God, and kept

her until her end in these sentiments. Consider frequently how your Saviour suffered for your sake; and repent of your sins sincerely, as they were the cause of Christ's bitter Passion. Love your Redeemer with all the strength of your heart, and make the resolution to serve Him in future most fervently.

IV. Teresa saw the place in hell which would have been hers, if she had not discontinued her idle discourses and her indifference in the worship of the Most High. Hence, she often gave humble thanks to God that He had not condemned her, and she learned by it how hurtful even a venial sin can become, since it may lead us gradually to the path of everlasting perdition. You have still more reason to give thanks to God that He did not call you away in your sin.

How long would you already have been in hell? If idle, empty conversation would have led Teresa gradually into hell, what may you not have to fear if you do not abstain from so much sinful talking in which you indulge? Learn also that you should not esteem a venial sin, however small it appears to you, as trifling; for, it may slowly lead you to damnation.

Many other lessons, which the life of St. Teresa contains, I leave to yourself to consider. One thing only I request of you. Call to mind frequently the words which the Saint uttered in her ecstasy: "Only one God! Only one death! Only one soul!" Love this only God, and do not offend Him. Take earnest care of your only, your precious, your immortal soul. "Keep thyself, therefore, and thy soul carefully." (Deut., iv.)

SIXTEENTH DAY OF OCTOBER.

ST. GALL, ABBOT, AND ST. WENDELIN, HERMIT AND ABBOT.

St. Gall, who became a holy Abbot and Confessor, was born in Ireland, in the middle of the sixth century. His parents desired that he should become a perfect servant of the Almighty; hence, they gave him, while he was yet very young, into the charge of St. Columban, who was Abbot of the monastery of Bencor. Gall, who had the same wish as his parents, went gladly to the holy Abbot; and, as he possessed an excellent mind, in addition to inclinations towards all that was good, he made in a short time great progress in virtue and knowledge. Columban was greatly rejoiced at this; and, as he had resolved to leave his home, and endeavor to awaken in other countries the love of solitude, prayer and austerity, he chose some of those who lived in his monastery to accompany him. Among these was Gall, with whom and a few others, Columban travelled from Ireland to England, and thence to France. The king who reigned at that period, received him and his compan-

ions very graciously, and appointed a place on the boundaries of the dioceses of Toul and Besançon, where they, according to their wish, might serve God in solitude and prayer. St. Columban built a monastery and a church there, and gave to those who wished to live under his direction certain rules by which to regulate their conduct. St. Gall was the first who adopted these rules, and conformed his life so perfectly to them that he served the others as an example of zeal, penitence and retirement, and incited them to follow in his steps. The holy community had passed many years with their venerable teacher in this solitude, when they were driven from their quiet retreat by the persecution of Brunehault, a restless and ambitious woman. Hence St. Columban went with his religious to Austrasia, under the protection of King Theodebert, who gave him permission to choose a place for his abode. While going about to select a place, the Saint came to the Lake of Constance, where a wild heathen people were living. St. Gall, seeing their idolatrous customs, preached to them with great zeal, representing to them their blindness in worshipping lifeless wood or stone as the true God. Finding, however, that they gave no ear to him, he threw some of their idols from the altars, broke them to pieces, and cast them into the lake. The idolaters, enraged at this, determined to kill the apostolic man. He, however, advised by St. Columban, fled and went with his teacher to the hamlet of Arbona, or Arbon, where they found a holy priest named Willemar, who pointed out a place to them upon which stood a chapel, which had been erected in honor of St. Aurelia, but had been desecrated by the heathen, who had placed their idols in it. Gall, filled with holy zeal, began forthwith to preach to the people, who came streaming thither, and placed the nothingness of their gods so clearly before them that many became converted to the true faith. After this he cleansed the chapel, which St. Columban then consecrated, and erected an altar in it for the celebration of the Divine mysteries. Around the chapel were built cells as dwelling-places for those who desired to live in retirement. For a time all went well, and the number of Christians, as well as that of the hermits, daily increased. But not long after, Gunzo, the reigning duke of that part of the country, became incensed against the servants of God, and commanded them to leave his domains immediately. Columban resolved to go into Italy, and intended to take his disciple Gall with him; but God visited the latter with so severe a fever that he was forced to remain behind with some companions. After having regained his health, St. Gall returned to the pious priest Willemar, who assigned him another place in the desert as his

abode. Although this seemed to be a dwelling fit only for wild beasts, and was also haunted by evil spirits, St. Gall feared neither, but went thither with his companions. Erecting a cross, he passed three nights in fasting and prayer, calling with confidence on God and the Divine Mother, and thus drove all the spirits of hell away. The wild beasts also left, excepting one bear, which greatly disturbed the servants of the Most High. One day, when the bear was in the act of carrying away the little food of the hermits, St. Gall, inspired by God, addressed him, commanding him to lay the food down again, and bring from the forest the wood which was needed by the hermits. God, who, upon Josue's prayer, had commanded the sun to suspend his course, ordained that the bear should obey the Saint. He dragged a large tree from the neighboring forest to the place where St. Gall was, who, as a reward, gave him a loaf of bread and permission to remain, but on condition that he would not harm any of the monks nor any other human being. The bear obeyed this command, to the great astonishment of all who came to see the Saint, or who lived in the desert.

When the place was entirely free from wild beasts and evil spirits, St. Gall desired to arrange everything as St. Columban had done at their former retreat, as he and his companions had determined to serve God most faithfully in watching, fasting and praying. But, when they were about to begin their work, messengers from the above-named duke Gunzo came, and in his name begged pardon for the wrong he had done them, and entreated St. Gall to come to the duke and release his daughter from the devil, who had taken possession of her. The holy man did as he was requested, and persuaded the princess to promise God, in gratitude for the grace bestowed upon her, to serve Him in virginal purity until her end. Gunzo, to show his gratitude to St. Gall, wished to give him the Episcopal See of Constance, which, however, the Saint refused to accept. As soon as he returned to the desert, he built a church there, surrounded by twelve cells: this was the beginning of the celebrated Abbey of St. Gall, which still exists in Switzerland, and was the origin of the town which bears the same name. As soon as the cells were finished, St. Gall instituted among his disciples the rules of St. Columban. He himself continued his holy life until his eightieth year, without in the least abating, either for sickness or the feebleness of age, his austerities towards himself. Shortly before his end, he was invited by St. Willemar to preach at the dedication of a church. The Saint accepted the invitation, and preached with deep emotion, to the great

edification of the people. Immediately after the service, he was seized by a fever, and died most peacefully a fortnight later. By means of his holy body many miracles were wrought, as well before it was transported to the desert as while it was buried there, in the church which he had erected. Those who visit this church are favored by the Almighty with many gifts, through the intercession of the Saint.



The commemoration of the holy Abbot Wendelin is also made in this month. He was a royal Scotch prince, and passed his childhood and youth very piously. The knowledge of the vanity of all temporal delights, honors and riches awakened in him a great desire to strive only after eternal possessions. Hence, he secretly, in the humble garb of a pilgrim, left, not only the royal palace, but also his country, with the intention of serving the Lord unknown in the desert. Having visited the shrines of the holy Apostles at Rome, and also the most renowned places of pilgrimage in France, he came to Westrich, in Germany, which at that period was nothing but a wilderness. On the spot where now stands St. Wendel's Chapel, he built himself a poor little hut with the boughs of trees. He took his rest at night on dried leaves, and practised for several years all possible penances. One day when he went to Treves to perform his devotions, and begged his bread from house to house, a nobleman who saw him, reproved him with great vehemence, saying that begging was the result of laziness and a disorderly life. Having abused him most violently, he added: "If you desire to maintain yourself honestly, come to me and you may guard my cattle, and this will prevent you from begging and stealing the bread from other poor people." The servant of God listened most patiently to the lord, and considering that all this might serve to make him despise the world still more, he accepted the offer.

At first, only the pigs, then the cows and oxen, and at last the sheep were entrusted to his care, and Wendelin, though by birth a prince, unweariedly fulfilled his humble duties. Whilst he was out in the fields with the cattle, he employed his time in praying and devout reading. He associated not with the other shepherds, as he perceived that they were unguarded in their words and actions. God frequently permitted his Guardian Angel to appear to him and encourage him to continue in his humble manner of living. Besides this, the sheep under his care were evidently blessed, as not only no accident ever happened to them, but they were like-

wise unusually fruitful, when the nobleman became aware of this he began to esteem Wendelin, while his servants persecuted him in every way. Among other things, they accused him of driving the sheep to a field so far distant that they were exhausted when they returned to the fold. The nobleman wished to convince himself of this, and found Wendelin, one evening, in a field very far from home. Greatly indignant at this, he reproved the pious man sharply. Wendelin begged him to moderate his wrath, assuring him that he would be home with his flock in time. This, by a miracle, really happened; for although the nobleman, on horseback, hastened home, Wendelin, with his flock reached it before him. Greatly surprised at this miracle, the lord begged the Saint's pardon, and offered him a great sum of money, that in future he might be no longer under the necessity of serving, but might lead an easy life. Wendelin, however, took only his wages, which he gave to the poor, and then returned to the desert, where he practised his former austerity, until God called him elsewhere, as we shall presently hear.

Meanwhile the Evil One endeavored to disturb the Saint by the most fearful temptations. He also attempted to frighten him by horrible apparitions. The Saint however, fighting against him, remained constant, and persevered in his holy life.

The inhabitants of the neighboring villages having heard of the Saint, came to him in all their troubles, especially at a time when an epidemic broke out among their cattle. At their entreaty, the holy man went with them, made the sign of the holy cross over the cattle, and restored them to health. In this manner God caused His humble servant to be greatly honored. It was also by the inspiration of the Almighty that the religious of the monastery of Thorley, which was not far from the hut of the Saint, elected him as successor to their late Abbot. Severin, the holy Archbishop of Treves, who had heard much of the Saint's holiness, was much pleased with this election, and he himself ordained him. Wendelin administered his office with great wisdom, and led those under him both by precept and example to spiritual perfection, until the Almighty called him to receive his eternal reward. St. Severin visited him in his last sickness, and administered the holy Sacraments to him. The Saint imparted to him who he was, and why he had left his father's court and had chosen so austere a life. Soon after having made this communication, he expired. When the Archbishop, after the Saint's death, revealed the holy Abbot's history, every one was deeply touched. The holy body was buried, by divine inspiration, in the place where St. Wendelin had lived as a hermit. The many miracles that were wrought at his tomb on sick men and

animals, caused a large Church and several houses to be erected there. This was the origin of the town which bears the name of the Saint. A spring is shown there, which arose at his prayer. When he had perceived a diminution of water, he prayed to God with great confidence, and then stuck his staff into the ground, when clear water sprang up, which to this day, is wholesome for man and cattle. St. Wendelin is invoked and honored as a special intercessor in times of epidemic among animals.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Gall, a servant or the Most High, commanded a wild beast of the forest no more to disturb or hurt any one; and the animal, not endowed with reason, obeyed. God, your Lord and Master, gives many commands to you; to you, who possess reason; you, who call yourself a servant of the Lord, and who must be such indeed, if you expect to go to heaven. And yet you will not obey, although this God can and surely will punish your disobedience. What can you say in excuse for this? The wild beast had nothing to expect from St. Gall, except perhaps some food. To you God promises heaven, if you obey Him. Do you not deserve hell for not obeying so generous a Master, who would reward your short obedience with eternal life? If the reward does not animate you, think of the punishment. God has punished already, for thousands of years, so many of His creatures in hell for their disobedience. He also threatens to punish you there, if you do not obey Him. Should this not be powerful enough to incite you to obedience, you will surely deserve no pity when you are cast into that place, where already so many suffer for their disobedience. If you do not wish to be numbered with these unhappy ones, obey your God in future. He is your Lord; show yourself

towards Him as an obedient servant. To pious and faithful servants, He gives heaven. Servants who do not obey, are neither pious nor faithful. Useless and disobedient servants are cast by Him into outer darkness, and are punished with horrible pains. "Well done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord; but the unprofitable servant cast ye out into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matt., xxv.) "And the servant, who knew the will of his Lord, and prepared not himself, and did not according to His will, shall be beaten with many stripes." (Luke, xii.)

II. St. Wendelin did not allow himself to be disturbed in his holy life by the temptations and threats of the devil, but fought bravely and unweariedly against him. St. Gall acted in the same way. The Evil One disturbs a great many in a violent manner with his temptations; hence, some become faint-hearted, and imagine that it is impossible to conquer him. But they are wrong in thus despairing; for, St. Bernard says very justly: "The devil can howl, but he cannot kill any one. Let him howl as long as he likes, and let us take care not to act like irrational

animals, which are frightened by howling alone." This means, that Satan is powerless with all his temptations, if you do not consent. You can conquer him by the grace of God. Therefore, do not become faint-hearted, but fight bravely. If he sees that he has frightened you, he is much pleased, and it is to be feared that he will overcome you entirely. But when he sees that you despise him more than you

fear him ; that you meet him fearlessly, especially at the beginning of his temptations, he generally loses courage and flies, as he did from Christ, whom he tempted three times, and was as often bravely and decidedly rejected. St. Chrysostom says : "Satan ventures a violent assault : if we, however, show ourselves strong-hearted and unyielding, he slowly retires, and at last flies."

SEVENTEENTH DAY OF OCTOBER.

ST. HEDWIG, WIDOW.

An example of all virtues, especially worthy to be imitated, is presented to us to-day, in the life of St. Hedwig. Her father was Berthold, Duke of Carinthia and Count of Meran. Her mother, Agnes, was of equally high birth. Already in Hedwig's childhood it was visible that God had gifted her with a mind far beyond her age. She possessed an innate inclination to all virtues, and nothing of what usually delights the young touched her heart. Just as little pleasure did she evince, in later years, in the honors, riches and amusements of the world. Reading and praying were her only enjoyments. All her books were devout works, and her prayers were said mostly before an image of the Blessed Virgin, whom she loved and honored like a mother. When scarcely twelve years old, she was given in marriage to Henry, Duke of Poland and Silesia. Although married so early in life, her conduct was so sensible and virtuous that every one was greatly astonished at it. Among her maxims was this : "The greater one is by birth, the greater one must be in virtue, and the more distinguished we are in station, the more we must distinguish ourselves by our conduct, in order to be a bright example to others." She became the mother of three sons and three daughters, all of whom she educated most piously. She was a little over twenty, and her husband thirty years of age, when their sixth child was born ; after which, desiring to serve God more perfectly, she made a vow before the bishop, in which her husband joined, to live in future in perpetual continence. From that hour, St. Hedwig grew daily more and more perfect

in all Christian virtues, occupying every moment left her from the cares she bestowed upon her children, in prayers and deeds of charity. She found especial comfort in assisting at Holy Mass; hence, she was not satisfied with one, but went to as many as she could; and the manner in which she conducted herself in church was a proof of her deep devotion. Towards widows and orphans, her kindness was truly motherly, and many of them she fed in her palace, serving them herself, sometimes on bended knees. She frequently visited the sick in the hospitals; encouraged them to be patient, and assisted them by rich alms. She never hesitated to wash the feet of the lepers, or to kiss the sores of the sufferers. She persuaded the Duke, her husband, to build a large convent not far from Breslau, for the Cistercian nuns, which she made a home for poor children, who were educated there, and afterwards provided for according to their station. Nothing could be more modest and plain than the garments of the holy Duchess, and her example in this respect induced others living at court to attire themselves with great simplicity. In the midst of the dissipation of the court, the Saint lived so austere a life, that it was more to be admired than to be followed.

To prove her virtue, God visited her with a great many cares and sorrows. The enemy invaded the dominions of her spouse, who was wounded in a battle and made prisoner. When this news was brought to her, she raised her eyes confidently to heaven, saying: "I hope to see him again soon, well and free." She herself went to Conrad, the Duke who had made her husband prisoner, and spoke so earnestly to him that he restored her husband to liberty. Soon after, Henry became dangerously sick, and Hedwig nursing him most faithfully, did everything to make his death happy. To those who pitied her after his death, she said: "We must adore the decrees of the Almighty, not only in days of happiness, but also in those of sorrow and bereavement." Three years later, she lost her first-born son, who was killed in a battle with the Tartars; and this sad event found her as submissive to the will of Providence as she had been on the death of her husband.

Soon after the burial of the Duke, the Saint had gone into the convent, which, at her request, he had founded, to be further removed from all temporal vanity, and to serve the Lord more peacefully and perfectly. She observed most strictly the regulations of the Order, desiring to do the meanest work and to be considered the least of the Sisters. In her austerity to herself she had now full liberty to satisfy herself. She fasted daily, except on Sundays and festivals; but her fasts were much more

rigorous than those of others ; for she abstained from all meat and wine, and partook only of herbs, bread and water. She wore, day and night, rough hair-cloth and an iron girdle which she had already worn while at court. She went bare-footed over snow and ice, and slept, when well, on the bare boards, and when sick, on straw covered with a coarse cloth. Her sleep lasted hardly three hours before Matins ; the remainder of the night she occupied in prayer, which she only interrupted to scourge herself to blood. So severe a life emaciated her body to a skeleton. While working, she always raised her soul to the Most High by mental prayer, and she was often found in an ecstasy, or raised high above the ground. Her conversation was only of God, virtue and piety. Towards the crucified Saviour, she bore the deepest devotion, and the mysteries of His bitter passion and death were the objects of her daily meditations, during which she frequently shed tears. Mary, the Blessed Virgin, was most ardently loved by her, and her whole countenance glowed at the bare mention of her name.

So holy a life could only be followed by a happy death, of which a severe sickness was the messenger. Before others became aware that her life was in danger, the Saint asked for the last Sacraments, and she received them with a devotion which drew tears from the eyes of all who were present. Before her end, St. Catherine, St. Thecla, St. Ursula, and St. Magdalen appeared to her, all of whom she had greatly honored during her life. These heavenly visitors comforted her and accompanied her to the mansions of everlasting bliss. Twenty-five years after her death, her holy body was exhumed, as so many extraordinary miracles had taken place. On opening the coffin, the whole church was filled with fragrance. The flesh of the whole body was consumed, except that of three fingers on her left hand. With these she had frequently held a picture of the Blessed Virgin, which she constantly carried with her. While dying, she held this picture so fast, that after her death it could not be removed, and it was buried with her. Pope Clement IV. placed the Duchess among the Saints on account of her many great virtues, of the miracles which she had wrought while she lived, and of those which took place after her death, through her intercession. The inhabitants of Poland venerate her as one of their special Patrons.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. "We must adore the decrees of the Almighty not only in happy days, but also in those of sorrow and bereavement," said St. Hedwig, when God deprived her of her beloved spouse, by an early death. Equally heroic was she, when by the will of Divine Providence, she lost her first-born son. How do you act in similar painful circumstances? You will never possess peace of mind, if you do not submit to the will of the Most High. And why should you not do this? The decrees of God are all just, although they are incomprehensible. Nothing that happens to you is unknown to the Almighty, or has not been permitted by His wisdom. All that God permits or ordains, is intended for your welfare. The true faith teaches you this. It also teaches you that you should not, under any circumstances, oppose the will of God. Hence, there remains nothing to do, but to make a virtue of necessity, to adore humbly the decrees of Providence, to submit to them willingly, and to unite your will with that of your God. In this manner you will be calm and contented in all adverse circumstances of life, and, at the same time, you will gather a treasure of merits for heaven. "Make of necessity a virtue," writes St. James of Nisibis, "and as you cannot escape the hand of the Almighty, but must submit to so great a Lord, humble yourself voluntarily under His overwhelming power."

II. Honor, riches, and the dissipation of this world, were no objects of desire to the holy duchess, who strove only after heavenly joys. To

obtain these, she practised heroic charity to the poor and mortified herself most austere. O how wisely she acted! If she had done the contrary, what profit would it be to her now? The temporal honors, riches and enjoyments would long since have passed, and the heavenly ones would have been lost to her. Take care that you do not become too much attached to what is worldly and perishable, but endeavor, through the practice of good works, to obtain that which is eternal. Remember the words of St. Augustine: "No fortune can be considered real fortune, but that which is eternal; no evil can be thought real evil, but that which never ends." If you, therefore, desire real fortune, honors and joys, strive to obtain those which last for evermore, and be unwearied in endeavoring to escape those evils which never end. It is to this end that St. Gregory admonishes you when he says: "At the last day of our life, where will be all that we now seek with so much care, and which we gather so diligently? Therefore, let us not strive after such honors and possessions as we must so soon leave, but let us seek such as we shall have for ever. And among the evils we fear, let us fear and avoid those which the wicked suffer for all eternity." "For what does it profit you," says St. Peter Damian, "if you glitter to-day in gold, silver and precious stones, or if, clothed in purple, you have superfluity in all sensual enjoyments, and to-morrow are cast poor and naked into hell?" what does it profit you?

EIGHTEENTH DAY OF OCTOBER.

ST. LUKE, EVANGELIST.

Among the holy men whom the Almighty chose to write the Gospel, or the history of the life and death, the teachings and miracles of Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, was St. Luke, the third of those who are called Evangelists. He is represented with an ox near him, according to the mysterious revelation made to the Prophet Ezekiel; because he begins his Gospel with the revelation of what happened to Zachary in the Temple, where oxen, sheep and other animals were offered, according to the Old Covenant, in sacrifice to the Almighty. St. Luke is said to have been born at Antioch, in Syria, and his occupation, in his youth, was the study of the liberal arts, especially rhetoric, physic, sculpture and painting. It is believed that St. Paul himself instructed him in the Christian faith; hence, St. Jerome calls him a spiritual son of that holy Apostle. It is quite certain that he accompanied St. Paul in the many and laborious travels which the holy Apostle undertook to convert the infidels. Hence he had a part in all the labors, dangers, hardships and persecutions which the Apostle endured. This, however, caused him to be most warmly beloved and highly esteemed by St. Paul, who mentions him in several of his epistles, and among other praises, calls him an Apostle.

At the desire of St. Paul, Luke wrote the Gospel in Greek, as the Apostle was at that time preaching to the Greeks, and also, because this language was very much disseminated. St. Luke relates, in his Gospel, much that is but slightly mentioned by the other Evangelists, for instance, the mystery of the Annunciation and the Incarnation of Christ: from which the holy Fathers conclude that he must have been on very friendly terms, not only with the Apostles, but also with the Divine Mother, as she could give him the best information concerning these mysteries. Another reason is, that St. Luke lived in chastity, and earnestly endeavored to guard and preserve this virtue. The commentators of Holy Writ have also observed, that St. Luke, more than the other Evangelists, gives sinners the hope of divine mercy, and encourages them to repentance, as is seen in the parable of the Prodigal Son, so lovingly received by his father, as also in that of the Good Shepherd, who with great solicitude sought the lost sheep, and brought it back to the fold; again in the history of the sinner who so mercifully receives pardon: in

the Samaritan who cares so kindly for the wounded traveller; but above all, in the wonderful conversion of the thief crucified with Christ, to whom, when he had humbly and penitentially begged to be remembered, our kind Saviour promised Paradise. St. Anselm gives the reason for this in the following words: "Luke was at first a physician of the body; hence it is that he speaks more than the other Evangelist, of the mercy of our Saviour, who heals and frees men from diseases of the soul." Besides the Gospel, St. Luke also wrote a book on the labors of the Apostles, which is called the Acts of the Apostles. In it he first relates the ascension of Christ and the coming of the Holy Ghost; and after this what and where the Apostles preached, the miracles they wrought, and the sufferings they endured for Christ's sake. He further describes the life of the first Christians, and the martyrdom of St. Stephen and St. James. He then relates the conversion of St. Paul, the labors and sufferings of this holy Apostle, which no one could know better than St. Luke, who was his constant companion. During the two years of St. Paul's imprisonment at Cæsarea, Luke aided him in every manner; he also accompanied him to Rome, when St. Paul had appealed to the emperor. At Rome, where the holy Apostle was again imprisoned for two years, St. Luke left him not, and allowed no persecution to separate him from his beloved master. When St. Paul was set at liberty, St. Luke accompanied him as before, wherever the unwearied Apostle preached the Gospel. St. Epiphanius relates, that, after the death of the two Apostles, Peter and Paul, St. Luke preached the Gospel of Christ in Italy, France, Dalmatia and Macedonia, with apostolic zeal. The Greeks assure us that he did the same in Egypt, Thebais and Lybia, and that he had great success in converting the infidels. It is easy to conceive what hardships, dangers and persecutions the holy Evangelist must have suffered in these many wearisome travels and in consequence of his zealous preaching. Yet he was never discontented, never desponding, but always cheerful; because he always thought of Him for whom he labored and suffered, and of the recompense that was awaiting him. St. Jerome writes that the Saint continued his apostolic labors until he had reached his 84th year. St. Gregory of Nazianzum, St. Paulinus and St. Gaudentius maintain that he ended his life by martyrdom. Nicephorus writes that the heathens hung him to an olive-tree, and that thus he died a martyr. It is certain that his life, full of cares and hardships, was a continued martyrdom, the severity of which he increased by severe fasting and other penances. Hence the Church says of him, in the prayer which she offers up to-day at Holy Mass, that he bore the

mortification of the cross ceaselessly in his body, for the love and honor of Christ. He ended his glorious labors and sufferings at Patras in Achaia. His holy relics, with those of St. Andrew were brought to Constantinople at the time of Constantine the Great. Long afterwards, they were removed to Pavia ; but the head had, some time before, been taken by Gregory the Great to Rome, and placed in St. Peter's Church. There is a tradition that St. Luke painted several likenesses of Christ and the Blessed Virgin, and left them to the Christians to comfort them. To this day several pictures of the Blessed Virgin are shown, which are supposed to be his works. One of these is at Rome, in the Church of St. Mary Major, and another is at Loretto ; both of these are venerated by the whole Christian world,

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. How usefully and beneficially did St. Luke employ his pencil, his chisel, his pen, and his tongue :—the tongue to preach the word of Christ, the pen to narrate the Lord's life and death, the pencil and chisel to make so many edifying likenesses of Jesus and Mary. Happy those who follow him in the good use of their limbs and the art they have learned! Unhappy, however, those who make their pencil and chisel instruments for pictures which give scandal to others ; and who use their pen for sensational, slanderous, or otherwise sinful books and writings ; who with their tongues, utter lying, slanderous, unchaste or other sinful speeches, and who greedily stretch out their hands to forbidden objects. The same may be said of those who offend God with eyes, ears, lips, feet or other limbs, and thus misuse members which God, in His mercy, gave them only for good. O how much pain such ungrateful beings will suffer in these members, which they now use only as instruments of wickedness ! I call them, not without reason, ungrateful beings ; for, I ask you, from whom has man his eyes, ears, tongue, hand, and feet

From none but God, the Lord, who gave them out of the abundance of His mercy. This is a great grace, and if you wish to come to the full knowledge of it, look at those who possess not these members, or have not the use of them ; at those who are blind, deaf, dumb or lame. How miserable they are ! Hence by giving these members to man, and the full use of them, God has surely shown great kindness to him ; and man ought to be duly grateful. If man, however, misuses these members to offend God, he commits a horrible deed of ingratitude. He is not worthy to have the use of his limbs ; for, as St. Bernard says : " He is not worthy to live, who will not live for Thee, O Jesus ! " So is he unworthy to have tongue, ears, hands, or feet, who uses them as means to offend the Majesty of God. Are you one of this kind of men ? Ask your conscience, and correct, while time is left to you, what you have done wrong.

II. St. Luke bore always the mortification of the Cross in his body. He was always cheerful in his work and in his sufferings ; never weary or desponding. The love of Christ, and the hope of an eternal

reward made everything light and easy to him. If you love Christ with your whole heart, and think frequently on the future recompense, I am confident that you will not become weary at your work, that you will not despond while suffering. Therefore, in future, think often how your Lord suffered for you, and how great a reward He has promised you for your labors and sufferings. "When I see my Lord and God laden with suffering and pain," says St. Bernard, "it becomes impossible for me not to bear with an easy mind and a cheerful countenance, every evil that

assails me." St. Augustine writes: "If you consider the reward which will be given to you, all that you have to endure will be but trifling." You will be astonished that so great a recompense is given for so little work; for, in truth, to gain eternal rest, one should perform a long work, and earn eternal joys by long suffering. As, however, the Almighty requires of us only a short work and a short suffering, who dares to complain or murmur? Should we not much rather work and suffer cheerfully? Let us work then, as long as we live, and suffer all that God sees fit to send us.

NINETEENTH DAY OF OCTOBER.

ST. PETER OF ALCANTARA, CONFESSOR.

St. Peter was born in the year 1499, at Alcantara, in Spain. He became celebrated for his great piety, and the austerity of his life, and in order to distinguish him from other Saints of the same name, received the surname, "of Alcantara." Besides other signs of future holiness, Peter, when only seven years of age, evinced so great a love for prayer, that he sometimes forgot to eat and drink. During the time of his studies he kept his innocence unspotted in the midst of many dangers, by making prayer, the holy Sacraments, and penances, its guardians. When hardly sixteen years old, he secretly left his father's house and entered the Franciscan Order, in which he soon became a model of all virtues. After having finished his novitiate, he was charged with different functions, all of which he discharged most successfully. The office of preacher was the most agreeable to him. An incredible number of hardened sinners were converted by his sermons, in which he treated of penance and a reform of life. The fame of his virtues and holiness gave additional weight to every word he uttered. Especially admirable were the untiring zeal with which he practised all manner of bodily austerities, and his continual communion with God in prayer. His whole life was one of extraordinary and almost unexampled mortification. He guarded his eyes so closely, that he not only never

looked on a woman's face, but knew his brethren only by their voices ; and after a long sojourn in the monastery, could not tell whether the choir and the dormitory were vaulted or covered with boards. The cell he chose for his dwelling was so narrow, that it was more like a tomb than the abode of a living human being, and so low, that he could not stand upright in it. He kept an almost continual fast, and hardly partook, every third day, of some undressed herbs, bread and water. It even happened that during eight days he took no food whatever. He scourged himself twice daily with iron chains. He wore, day and night, a penitential instrument made of tin, pierced like a grater. During forty years, he allowed himself only one hour and a half of sleep at night, and this, not lying down, but kneeling, or standing with his head leaning against a board. The remainder of the night he occupied in prayer and meditation. As long as he lived in the order, he went barefoot and bareheaded, even in the coldest season. His clothing consisted of his habit and a short cloak, made of rough sack-cloth. He seemed to have made a compact with his body never in this world to allow it any peace or comfort. His union with God in prayer had reached so high a degree, that he was often seen in ecstasy, or raised high in the air, and surrounded by a heavenly brightness. The power of his holy prayers was experienced not only by many hardened sinners, but also by many sick for whom he obtained health and strength. The inhabitants of the city of Albuquerque, ascribed to him their deliverance from the pestilence ; for, as soon as St. Peter had called upon the divine mercy, the pestilence, which had most fearfully ravaged the city, disappeared. The love of God, which filled the heart of the Saint, manifested itself in his intercourse and conversation with men, whom he endeavored to inflame with the same love. This appeared in all his actions, but especially at the time of Holy Mass, when he stood like a Seraph before the altar, his face burning, and tears streaming from his eyes. When meditating on the passion and death of our Saviour, he was frequently so deeply touched in his inmost heart, that for hours he was like one dead. His devotion to God would sometimes burn his heart so intensely, that to moderate his emotion, he would go into the fields to breathe more freely. Having reached his fortieth year, he was chosen provincial, but endeavored to refuse the dignity, and when compelled by obedience to accept it, he regarded it as an opportunity to do good to those under his charge. God admonished him to restore the primitive observance in the

Order, according to the rule and spirit of St. Francis. Although he could not but foresee the many and great difficulties which he would encounter in this undertaking, still, trusting in God, he went courageously to work after having obtained the sanction of the Pope. The Almighty visibly aided His faithful servant; for, in six years, the Saint had founded nine monasteries, in which the mortification and the perfect poverty which St. Francis especially cherished were observed in all the rigor of the first Rule. In the course of time, this renewed Order was disseminated through all Spain, to the great joy of the Saint. This and other labors which he performed to the honor and glory of God made him greatly esteemed by every one. St. Teresa, who lived at that period, asked his advice in her cares and doubts whenever she had occasion, and called him a Saint while he was yet upon earth. St. Francis Borgia entertained great friendship for him, and the praise of his great virtues resounded throughout all Spain. The Emperor Charles V. desired to make him his confessor, but the humble servant of the Almighty knew how to say so much of his incapacity for this office, that the emperor abandoned the idea, to the Saint's great joy. This became a new incentive for him to devote himself entirely to the service of God and the welfare of those under him.

He had reached his 63rd year, more by a miracle than in a natural way, when he was visited by Providence with a severe illness, which soon left no hope of his recovery, as his body was entirely wasted away by the severity of his life, his painful journeys and his uninterrupted labors. He himself was informed from on high of his approaching end and he received the last Sacraments with so deep a devotion, that the eyes of all present were filled with tears. After this he fell into a rapture, in which the Divine Mother and St. John, the Evangelist, appeared to him and assured him of his salvation. Hence, regaining consciousness, he cheerfully recited the words of the Psalmist: "I have rejoiced in those things which have been said to me; We shall go into the house of the Lord." Having said this, he calmly gave his soul into the keeping of his Creator, in the year of Our Lord 1562. St. Teresa, who has written much in his praise, says among other things: "He died as he had lived, a Saint; and I have, after his death, received many graces from God, through his intercession. I have often seen him in great glory, and when I saw him the first time, he said to me: "O happy

penance, which has obtained so great a glory for me!" The Roman Breviary testifies that St. Teresa, though, at the time of his death, far from him, saw his soul gloriously ascend into heaven. The biographers of St. Peter, relate many and great miracles which he wrought while he was still living. In the Breviary, we read, among other things, the following. "He crossed rapid rivers with dry feet. In times of great poverty, he fed his brethren with food which he received from heaven. The staff which he placed in the ground, immediately became a budding fig-tree. Once, in the night-time, when he sought shelter from a snow-storm in a roofless house, the snow remained hanging in the air, above it, and thus formed a roof to protect him from being buried in the snow."

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Peter fasted most austere-ly ; once in three days he took some herbs, bread and water, and frequently tasted no food for eight days. How is your conduct in regard to this point? Are you, perhaps, one of those who consider fasting as something which is not conducive to our salvation, or which is suitable only to priests, religious in convents, or hermits in the desert? Do you consider the transgression of the law which commands you to fast as a mere trifle? If you are one of these, I assure you that you deceive yourself to your own great detriment. The Saints had quite another idea of fasting. St. Augustine writes : "While investigating this matter, I see that in the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles, and indeed in the whole work called the New Testament, fasting is ordained." Therefore, if fasting is commanded by God, it must be necessary to our salvation. Where do we read that it is commanded only to priests and hermits? St. Bernard teaches that fasting is necessary "to appease the angry God, to obtain pardon for our sins,

to escape the pains of hell, to guard ourselves against vice, and to gain salvation." St. Chrysostom says : "If fasting was necessary in Paradise, how much more necessary must it be out of Paradise?" What have you to say against this? Were the Saints mistaken, or are you and a great number of people in our time mistaken? What path will you take in the future? I advise you to follow that which the Saints have walked ; it is the most certain to lead you the right way. I do not ask you to fast as rigorously as St. Peter did ; but it is your duty to fast on the days and in the manner prescribed by the Church of Christ.

II. "O happy penance, which has obtained so great a glory for me!" exclaimed St. Peter, after his death. Have you ever read of a man of the world, who, on his death-bed, or after his death, exclaimed rejoicingly : "O happy pleasures of the world ! happy dances and dissipations, happy comforts, sensualities and vanities of the world, which I sought and enjoyed ! How great a consolation, how much benefit and glory they

are to me now!" Have you, I ask, ever read or heard of such a thing? I have not. But more than once have I read, heard or seen with my own eyes, the dying regret with bitter tears, their immoderate seeking after worldly pleasures, and wish that they had led an austere penitential life. What do you intend to do? St. Peter had made a compact with his body, never to allow it any peace or comfort in this world. May you at least make with your body the following compact: I. Never to allow it to indulge in any unchaste amusements.

II. Not to be kept from serving God by any discomfort arising from heat, cold, &c. III. Not to give more time to sleep than you need. IV. To keep, if possible, the prescribed fasts, although it may be a hard task to the flesh. V. Lastly, to deprive yourself sometimes even of some innocent enjoyment, to punish yourself for having offended the Almighty by sinful pleasure. Make and keep this compact; and you will be able some day to say with St. Peter: "O happy penance! happy mortification which has obtained such glory for me!"

TWENTIETH DAY OF OCTOBER.

ST. IRENE, VIRGIN AND MARTYR.

In the eighth Century, lived at Villa de Toma, a city of Portugal, a very pious married couple, named Hermigius and Eugenia, who had one daughter, to whom they had given the name of Irene. As soon as the latter was old enough to be instructed, they requested Selius, Abbot of a neighboring monastery, who was a brother of Eugenia, to give her in charge of a religious that she might be instructed in the Christian doctrine and also learn to read and write. Selius received Irene joyfully and placed her in a house not far from his monastery, where two of his sisters and some other ladies lived, who were all instructed by a religious, named Remigius. For several years all went well, and Irene not only progressed in her studies, but also became a model of virtue and piety. She already at that time resolved to enter a convent, and bestowed all her care on preserving her innocence and chastity without spot, so that she might make a worthy sacrifice of it to the Almighty. She loved solitude, and never left the house except when she went with her companions to church. Britaldus, a noble youth, who one day saw her on such an occasion, became inflamed with passion towards her. He most eagerly sought an opportunity to see her alone, and to make her acquainted with his designs; but as she never appeared alone

and he was not allowed to enter the house where she was, he saw no way to attain his end. Still, he did not curb his passion, which at last grew so violent, that he became sick with grief, and seemed slowly to pine away. When Irene was informed of this, she pitied, with her whole heart, the soul of the unhappy youth. Taking counsel with God in prayer, she took courage, and went to him with some respected person, intending to cure him of his wicked folly. Britaldus hesitated not to inform her of the cause of his sickness; but the chaste virgin reproved him with such earnest words that he acknowledged his wickedness, repented of it and promised to reform. He thanked Irene when she went away, for having saved his soul and body from ruin by her Christian exhortations, adding, however, that if she ever gave her love to any man, it should be to him, as otherwise she would pay it with her life. Irene replied that she had given her heart entirely to God, and therefore, that he should discard all such thoughts and care only for the salvation of his soul and the health of his body. After this, Irene left him, and returning to her convent, she gave thanks to God for having sustained her with His grace, and continued in her zeal for His service. Suddenly, however, she was placed in far greater danger of losing her purity than heretofore. Remigius, who until now had led her in the path of virtue and piety, fell himself into the snares of the devil. Irene, horrified at this, reproved him for his wickedness. Remigius was frightened at her words, but not converted; for, to revenge himself, he administered to her, a few days later, a potion which disfigured her. The rumor of this soon spread through the entire city, and Britaldus, when it reached his ears, became so enraged that he resolved to kill her, and hired one of his servants to commit the bloody deed.

The innocent Irene meanwhile was oppressed with sadness. To her other sufferings were added suspicion and accusation; and she even heard herself charged with a vice of which she had the greatest horror. She knew also that if she protested her innocence, no one would listen to her, or believe her words. Even her relations abused, shunned and abhorred her. In this pitiful condition, she turned her thoughts to God, who knew her innocence, and begged Him to have mercy on her and save her. To free her heart from its terrible burden of grief, she went, for several days, early in the morning, into a wood near the river Naban, and called aloud to God for help, while the tears streamed down her cheeks. The assassin hired by Britaldus, having observed that she left the house at a

certain hour, followed her one day and thrust his dagger into her heart, and threw her dead body into the river. When during several days, nothing had been heard or seen of her, it was thought that she had fled in her despair or perhaps had killed herself. Selius, the pious Abbot, on becoming aware of all the reports which were afloat about Irene, was greatly grieved, and prayed to God that He would make known the truth. His prayer was heard; heaven revealed to him all that had passed, and where to find the holy body of the murdered virgin. Selius, greatly rejoiced, went on the following day, accompanied by his religious and several other persons, to the river. When they had reached the spot where the Naban empties itself into another river, they found that the stream had left its bed, in the middle of which they saw a magnificent coffin, in which lay the body of the chaste Irene still stained with blood. Without doubt the Angels had prepared the coffin and placed the virgin in it. All present wept with joy. The pious Abbot ordered the coffin to be brought to the bank, but it could not be moved, for, God had ordained that his chaste spouse should have her last resting-place on that spot. The Abbot, therefore, cut off some of her hair and a piece of the garment with which the angels had clothed her, and then returned, giving thanks to the Almighty for having revealed the innocence of his handmaid. The river, returning to its bed, buried the coffin under its waters. Britaldus and Remigius, hearing of the miracle, confessed their crimes, went to Rome and did penance until the end of their days. The relics which the Abbot had taken from the virgin were deposited in his church as a sacred treasure, on account of the many miracles which God performed on the blind, lame, and sick, who devoutly touched them. Irene was placed in the number of the holy Virgins and Martyrs.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>The chaste Irene was suspected and accused of great sins. Every one was ready to believe her guilty, and spoke ill of her without scruple; and yet all were mistaken, all were deceived. Irene was innocent. They judged her wrongfully; their suspicions were false. Oh! that we would learn how dangerous it is to suspect evil of our</p>	<p>neighbor, to speak ill of him, to judge him hastily, or listen to others who slander him. We think sometimes that what so many say must be true; and yet it is false, and the whole affair proves entirely different from what it was suspected to be. Eyes and ears are often deceived. Do you know the best way? I. Avoid defamers and slan-</p>
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derers, do not lend them your ear; prevent the evil done by gossiping, as much as you can. If no one listened to the slanders, and, by agreeing with them, strengthened them in their wickedness, they would soon cease to defame their neighbor's character or actions. But if we like to listen to them, ask them about several circumstances, or are astonished at what they relate and desire to know more, we give them occasion to become still more daring, and to persevere in their wicked discourse. "Where there are no listeners, there are no slanderers," says St. Augustine. II. Do not easily believe the evil that is told you of your neighbor, as it is known to you that people have been deceived hundreds and hundreds of times. III. Do not watch the faults of others, if you are not by your duty called upon to do so. IV. If an evil suspicion is suggested to you, yield not to it, but think: what have I to do with it? it is not my affair; I am not set as a judge over my neighbor. Further, attend more to your own faults, and you will surely be more lenient in judging your neighbor's, whose failings are not so numerous as your own. "And why seest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, and seest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" says the Lord, our Saviour, (Matt. vii.) And St. Paul says: "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own Lord he standeth or falleth." (Rom. xiv.)

II. The chaste Irene was deeply grieved when she heard how they suspected her, how they judged her, and what they said of her.

Still more painful must it have been to her when they refused to believe her when she protested her innocence and endeavored to defend her good name. What more did she do? Did she call down vengeance on her slanderers? did she complain against the Almighty who allowed it? or did she give way to immoderate sadness? She did nothing of all this. She placed her trust in the Almighty, as witness of her innocence. God neither failed to reveal her innocence to the world, nor to bring to shame her slanderers, though not until after her death. That you should grieve when you are suspected of evil, or judged wrongfully, is no sin; for you are but human, and therefore feel a wrong done you. God permits you also to defend yourself, to vindicate your good name, and protest against false accusations. But when all that you say or do is of no avail to clear you in the eyes of the world, leave your justification in the hands of the Almighty. Abstain from cursing, complaints and murmurs; despond not; for, God will reveal your innocence, if not in this life, on the day of judgment, when all will see, to your great honor, that you were not what they took you to be. Meanwhile, console yourself, as has already been said, with your own conscience, with the example of St. Irene, nay, even with that of Christ, your Lord, who, defamed and derided, died the death of the greatest criminal. "If we think on the passion of Christ, nothing will seem so hard that we cannot bear it patiently," says St. Isidore.

TWENTY-FIRST DAY OF OCTOBER.

ST. HILARION, ABBOT; ST. URSULA AND HER COMPANIONS, VIRGINS
AND MARTYRS.

The Roman Martyrology mentions to-day, St. Hilarion, whose life was written by St. Jerome. He was born, in the year 288, at Tabatha, near Gaza in Palestine, of heathen parents. While still a boy, he was sent to Alexandria to study. Making the acquaintance of some Christians, he became converted, and from that hour, he was no more seen at the theatres of the heathens, but only in the assemblies of the faithful. His conduct was so blameless and edifying, that it put many, though born in Christianity, to shame. At that time, the austere and holy life led by St. Antony in the deserts of Egypt, was much spoken of. Hilarion was filled with the desire to see this holy man, and to learn from him how to become a Saint. Hence he went to him, observed carefully all his actions, and endeavored to follow in his footsteps. Having passed two months under so famous a teacher, he acquainted him with his wish to lead a solitary life and to serve God in a desert. Antony, praising his desire, gave him some wholesome instructions in regard to it, and then dismissed him. Hilarion returned to his native place, and as his parents had meanwhile died, he gave to the poor the large fortune which he had inherited, and went to a desert in Egypt, a mile and a half from Majuma. Here he began, though only 15 years of age, the austere life which he continued until his death. He was clothed in a coarse tunic and a poor cloak, which St. Antony had given him, and his sustenance was some figs, a handful of lentils, or some roots, of which, however, he partook not until after sun-down. His bed was the ground covered with matting. He divided the day between work and prayer, and the hut in which he lived was more like a tomb than the dwelling of a living being. It is indescribable how much he had to suffer from the temptations and persecutions of evil spirits. They appeared to him in the most terrible forms, and disturbed him in all possible ways. Hilarion, however, was not to be frightened, but armed himself against these enemies, by calling upon the most holy name of Jesus, by praying and by fasting. Fighting valiantly, he always conquered. He addressed his body, which seemed to have evil desires, thus: "Wait awhile, you

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fool! I will cure you of your mischief. I will take care that every thought of pleasure shall leave you." After which he began to mortify himself so long by severe fasting, scourging and watching, that every disorderly wish expired. At the instigation of Satan, some murderers one day attacked him, and endeavored to drive him away. They asked him what he would do in case robbers should come to him. He answered: "They who possess nothing, do not fear them."—"But they may take your life," said they. Hilarion replied: "Of course they can do so; but for that very reason I do not fear them, because I am daily prepared to die." After the holy man had already passed 22 years of his life in this desert, God desired to make him known to the world by miracles. A noble lady of Gaza having heard of the holy hermit, came to him and begged him, with tears in her eyes, to go to her house and visit her three sons who were mortally sick. The Saint refused to comply with her request; but the mother ceased not to weep and entreat him until he had promised to come during the night, which accordingly he did. Saying a short prayer, he laid his hand upon the children, and all three rose from their beds in perfect health. Hardly had this become known in the city, when several sick were carried to him that he might cure them. The Saint, by healing all of them, converted a great many heathens to the true faith. Many also came to him who desired to live piously, and to lead, under his guidance, a solitary life. At that time, there was no cloister of hermits to be found in all Palestine, and it was Hilarion who there became the first father of the hermits, as Saint Antony had been in Egypt. The number of those who lived in obedience to Hilarion increased in a few years to 3000. He prescribed certain rules to them, and kept them all under his care. Meanwhile he continued, through the power of God, to perform many miracles on the blind, the lame and other infirm, but especially on the possessed, of whom he delivered a great number. Among others, a girl was brought to him, whom a youth, who loved her, had, by magic, thrown under the power of the devil. When the holy man began the exorcism, the evil spirit howled and roared in a horrible way, and was heard to say: "It was not my fault. I was forced into her." The Saint said: "Why didst thou not rather take possession of the youth?" "What should I do there?" replied the devil; "he already carries the devil of love in his bosom." Hilarion commanded him to depart, and he was forced to obey. The maiden, however, received a sharp rebuke from the Saint, because she had not

guarded herself sufficiently against danger. At another time, a furious camel, that had killed a great number of people, was brought to him. The Saint commanded them to let the camel loose, and going fearlessly towards it, he stretched forth his hand and said: "Thou wicked spirit of damnation, thou canst not frighten me; whether thou appearest in the form of a small fox, or a huge camel, thou art always only a little devil." The animal ran towards the Saint, full of rage, as if it would tear him in pieces; but when quite near him, it fell dead upon the ground. All present were greatly astonished, but the Saint taught them to meet the Evil One fearlessly, because he is weak in himself, and can harm no one who opposes him with courage. These and other similar miracles caused a great concourse of people constantly to stream to the dwelling of the Saint, who was greatly saddened by it and wept bitterly. Being asked the cause of his grief, he answered: "Ah! my solitude is lost; I am again in the world; I fear that it will be said to me, one day: Thou hast already received thy reward." He then determined to seek another place, where he might serve God more quietly. He believed he had found it in a desert of Upper Egypt, whither he had gone accompanied by a few of his disciples. That district had suffered greatly for 30 years from drought, which had been followed by a dreadful famine; and the inhabitants all came flocking around him, entreating him to pray that God would have mercy on them. Hardly had the Saint commenced to pray, when the Almighty sent down the long-wished for and fruitful rain. The people all came to thank the Saint, bringing with them their sick, that God might restore their health by Hilarion's intercession. This induced him again to flee. Having arrived at the sea-shore, he went on board of a ship, which carried him to Sicily, where he concealed himself in a dark forest. But here also he soon became known, by means of persons possessed by the devil. As the people again flocked to him, asking for help, he went to Dalmatia, and concealed himself for a time at Epidaurus. But when an earthquake rent the ground, and the sea began to encroach upon the land, as if God were about to punish the world with another flood, the inhabitants came to the Saint, led him to the sea-shore, and begged him to prevent the evil which was threatening their lives. The Saint made the sign of the cross three times in the sand, and behold! the waves, though mountain-high, overstepped not the place which he had marked. When the Saint perceived that this miracle had become known, he

hastened away and came to the island of Cyprus, where he served the Almighty with as much zeal as though he had just begun his pious career. He was in his eightieth year when God called him to his eternal home by a happy death.

Memorable are the words which he spoke to his soul, shortly before his end, when he was assailed by a slight fear: "Go forth my soul," said he, "go forth. Why art thou afraid? Thou hast served the Lord nearly three score and ten years, and fearest thou death?"



To-day we commemorate the festival of St. Ursula and her companions. Although her life and martyrdom are variously described by different historians, we cannot therefore conclude with some heretical writers, that she never existed, and that all that has been told of her are fables; for, although historians differ in some points, yet all unanimously declare that St. Ursula and her companions sacrificed their lives for their faith, and in defence of their virginity. The short sketch we give of this Saint is partly taken from the works of the celebrated Baronius, and partly from the Roman Breviary.

The Roman General, Maximus, surnamed Flavius Magnus Clemens, who commanded the Imperial armies in Great Britain, caused himself, in 383, to be proclaimed Emperor by his soldiers, while the lawful Emperor Gratian was still alive. After this, he crossed the sea, landed on the shores of France, took possession of a large portion of it, drove the inhabitants away, and occupied the land with his soldiers, among whom he divided the conquered towns and villages. Conanus, a tributary king in Great Britain, who commanded one part of the army of this new Emperor, advised him to bring from England virgins, who might be given in marriage to the new inhabitants of the conquered land, in order to keep them in obedience and fidelity to their master. Maximus, pleased with this advice, sent an embassy to Great Britain, and stating his reasons, demanded a great number of maidens. The Britons hesitated not to consent to the new Emperor's demand, because many of his soldiers were Britons and because Maximus had given them considerable property. They, therefore, assembled the desired number of virgins, placed them in several boats, and sent them to France. The noblest among them was Ursula, daughter of the king of Wales, who was to become the spouse of Conanus. The wisdom of the Almighty, however, had de-

creed otherwise; for, whilst the ships sailed from England to France, contrary winds arose, which drove them all to the shores of Germany. It is believed that they went up the Rhine, and landed in the neighborhood of Cologne. At that period, the wild Huns happened to be there, whom the Emperor Gratian had called to his aid against Maximus, who resided for some time at Treves. When these heathens beheld this large number of virgins, they forced them to land and would have sacrificed them to their lust. Ursula, however, the Christian heroine, exhorted all, rather to suffer the most bitter death than consent to evil. All followed her admonition, and courageously resisted the savages, who, in their furious rage, killed the defenceless virgins with swords, arrows and clubs. Only one of the maidens, Cordula, had escaped and concealed herself during the massacre; but repenting of her timidity, she revealed herself on the following day, and last of all, she received the crown of martyrdom. The bodies of the holy virgins were buried, with great solemnities, by the inhabitants of Cologne. Their memory, however, and the veneration with which they were regarded, were not confined within the walls of this town, but spread over the whole Christian world.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Did you notice how fearless Hilarion showed himself when the Evil Spirits visibly appeared to him, and assailed him with violent temptations? Follow his example, and become not despondent under temptations, but resist bravely and fearlessly. Satan cannot do violence to you. Notice also the answer of the devil when he was asked why he had not gone into the body of the unchaste youth. Learn from it that the devil lives in the body of the unchaste, as Christ has His dwelling in the body of the chaste. Who lives in your soul and in your body? Remember, also, how St. Hilarion encouraged himself in his last hour, when he was troubled with fear at the thought of appearing before the Almighty. Those who can say, at the end of their life, that they have

faithfully served God, will neither tremble nor be afraid, or they will, like St. Hilarion, soon recover from their fear. But how will it be with those who cannot say that they have faithfully served God, but only that they have often and most grievously offended Him, and are not reconciled to Him by true penance? Will you be able to exclaim, on your death-bed, with St. Hilarion: "Go forth, my soul, go forth. Fear not; thou hast served the Lord, thy God, so many years; fear not." Indeed, fear not, provided you have served the Lord in virtue and piety; but if, instead, you have served the devil by vice and sin, how then will you speak in your last hour? Oh! be on your guard that you may not experience it to your own eternal loss.

II. St. Ursula encouraged and exhorted her companions to preserve their purity, and to give up life rather than lose it. Heed it well: the Saints advise and exhort others to preserve purity. Who, therefore, are those that tempt others to violate it? St. Bonaventure says: "The mouth of him who tempts others to impurity, is the mouth of a devil!" Hence, those who tempt to impurity are incarnate devils, or the devil speaks through their mouths. How senseless are you, therefore, when you listen to them and follow their advice. St. Ursula and her com-

panions did not listen to the savage Huns and followed them not. Thus must you act, and neither listen to them nor obey them who would tempt you to the least sin against purity. "Shun and abhor," says St. Nilus, "all those who would prevent you from the practice of virtue, and who tempt you to violate the laws of God and to sin against purity." Detest them as you would the Evil One himself; for, in truth, "There is no difference between an evil spirit and a human being tempting you to impurity," says St. Cyril of Alexandria.

TWENTY-SECOND DAY OF OCTOBER.

ST. JOHN CAPISTRAN, CONFESSOR.

Among the Saints who glorified and illustrated the Church of Christ in the 15th Century, St. John was one of the most famous. He derived his surname from the place of his birth, Capistran, a town in the kingdom of Naples. After he had studied the liberal arts, he was sent to Perugia to study theology and law, in both of which he soon became so proficient, that he was made an officer at the Court of Justice, and gained the highest esteem of the whole city. One of the richest and first men gave him his daughter in marriage, together with a large fortune. Every thing seemed to smile upon John; but his good fortune lasted not long. Perugia refused to acknowledge Ladislas, King of Naples, as her rightful Lord, and revolted against him. John was secretly an adherent of the King, and stood well with the royal army. This no sooner became known, than he was put in prison. He expected surely that he, in whose service he had lost his liberty, would take his defence and set him free; but as this did not take place, John began to see how faithless the world is, and how changeable is all temporal happiness. About the same time, his young wife died, and he determined to leave the world and endeavor to gain, in a religious order, the grace of the Most High and eternal salvation.

To this end, he sold all his property and gave the money he received for it as ransom for his liberty, and then went to the convent of St. Francis, humbly praying to be admitted. The superior, fearing that John had made his resolution too hastily, and that he would not persevere, examined him very strictly, and tried his vocation with the greatest severity. John stood the test and was allowed to take the vows after the novitiate; and from that time, his life was a continual fast. He partook of food only once a day, and ate no meat for 36 years. Three hours was all the time he gave to sleep, and that upon the bare ground. Besides this, he scourged himself daily to blood, and endeavored to mortify himself in every possible manner. His heart was inflamed with love for God, and nothing was more agreeable to him than union with the Almighty in prayer, reading devout books and listening to the word of God. Before the Crucifix or in presence of the Blessed Sacrament, he passed whole hours on his knees, either with tears in his eyes or in deep rapture. The name of John, said he, had been given him by the special design of God, in order that he should endeavor to become a favorite disciple of the Lord and a faithful son of the Blessed Virgin. He was zealous for the salvation of men, and travelled, for several years, through the principal cities of Italy, preaching everywhere the word of God. He had an especial gift to move the most hardened sinners; and the sighs and tears of his audience sometimes obliged him to interrupt his sermon. At that period lived St. Bernardine of Sienna, a holy missionary, who possessed the same zeal as John, but who had been accused at Rome, on account of his veneration for the most holy Name of Jesus, which to some seemed immoderate. St. John went to Rome to defend his friend, and thus his virtue and wisdom became known to the Popes, who employed him in many important affairs, all of which he conducted to their greatest satisfaction. Nicholas V. sent him as apostolic Legate to Hungary, Poland and Germany, which gave him an opportunity to do indescribable good in those countries. Many heretics, especially Hussites, were led back to the true Church; and in converting them, he heeded not the peril in which he placed his own life. Twice was poison given him by the enemies of the true faith, but God miraculously protected his life. Many other labors of the holy man for the benefit of the faithful we omit for want of space.

One deed, however, for which he deserved the thanks of the whole Christian world, must not fail to find a place in this work. Mahomet II. threatened to exterminate Christianity. He had put an end to the Greek empire in 1453, by taking Constantinople

and more than 200 other Cities; and in 1456, with an immense army, he besieged the city and fortress of Belgrade, with the intention of becoming master of the entire Western Empire. The Pope, relying more on virtue and holiness than on the arms of the Christian princes, sent St. John to preach the holy war against the arch-enemy of Christianity, and to exhort all Christian princes to take up arms, and commanded him to be present in person with the Christian army during the campaign. The holy man executed the command, united the Christian powers and urged them to the battle. The two armies, the Turkish and the Christian, were arrayed against one another, but the former was far superior to the latter in numbers; and yet on the issue of this battle depended the fate of Christendom. St. John, with a crucifix in his hand, went from rank to rank, encouraging the soldiers to fight bravely, by repeating to them that it was Christ and His Church whom they were defending. The presence and the exhortation of so holy a man gave courage to the soldiers, and, at the first assault, they carried consternation into the army of the infidels. Mahomet himself was wounded, and his soldiers were lying in thousands on the field of battle in their blood. The victory was complete, and so visibly the fruit of a miracle, that neither the leaders of the Christian armies, nor the soldiers, ascribed it to the power of arms, but to the holiness and prayers of St. John. Thanking the Lord of armies for His protection, the Saint after the war, retired to the cloister of Villich, in Hungary, whence, after three months of a most holy life, he was called to receive the crown of everlasting glory, in the 72nd year of his age. The Almighty glorified His faithful servant, before and after his death, by many miracles. At Vienna, in the church of St. Stephen, is yet to be seen the pulpit from which St. John preached.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. As soon as St. John recognized the instability of the world, the faithlessness of the favor and friendship of man, and the vanity of all temporal happiness, he began to seek most earnestly the favor and friendship of the greatest of all monarchs, and with it, eternal salvation. He acted wisely; for, the grace of God is to be esteemed more highly than that of all the

monarchs of the world. It is more necessary, useful and desirable than the friendship of all men. It is very difficult to gain the friendship of men; it is also very easy to lose it; and when we need it most we seldom find it. The favor of God is easily gained; and no one can take it from us while we deserve it. In every need, we can promise ourselves to be supported by Him.

Why, then, do you not more eagerly seek after it? Why do you not endeavor to preserve it? Why are you more solicitous to gain the favors of mortal man than the grace of your God? "The love of a human being," says the pious Thomas à Kempis, "is a false and unstable love: but the love of Jesus is true and constant." Love and keep as a friend, Him who does not leave you, especially not at a moment when all others will forsake you. Remain with Jesus in life and death. Give yourself to Him who alone can help you when all others abandon you.

II. Nothing was more agreeable to St. John than his communion with God in prayer, in reading devout books and listening to the word of God. In prayer, we speak to the Almighty, according to St. Augustine. In pious books and religious instructions, the Almighty speaks to us. Do you also love this kind of intercourse with God? How much time do you devote to it? Your conduct shows that you converse more willingly with men than with God, because you give so much more time to the former than to the latter. Your many frivolous visits, your long, empty

conversations are a proof of it. Can you believe that such intercourse with human beings is more useful or more necessary than an intercourse with the Almighty? You can hardly be so foolish. "The greatest Saints," says Thomas à Kempis, "have avoided the society of men. As often as I have been among men, I have returned from them less good. I wish I had been more silent, and that I had not had any intercourse with men." It is seldom that one returns from long conversations without sin; for, the Holy Ghost assures us that long conversations are a cause of sin. By this, however, I do not mean to forbid necessary or proper intercourse with others. But do not frequent the society of the wanton or wicked; and do not go too much into society. Do not prolong your conversations without need. Guard yourself against empty, useless or idle conversations. If you observe these rules, you will have more time to be with God in prayer, devout reading and sermons. "If you withdraw from gossiping and idle visits, you will find time enough for pious meditation", writes Thomas à Kempis.

TWENTY-THIRD DAY OF OCTOBER.

ST. SEVERIN, BISHOP OF COLOGNE.

St. Severin, whom the city of Cologne venerates as its patron Saint, was born at Bordeaux, in France, of very pious parents. After having successfully concluded his studies, he made the acquaintance of St. Martin, bishop of Tours, whose virtues he greatly admired and endeavored to imitate. Having been ordained priest, he was unwearied in his zeal to save souls. He tried to strengthen the Catholics in the true faith, and to bring the heretics to the knowledge of their error, and to convert

them. The Arian heresy was, at that period, gaining much ground, and even counted some followers in Cologne, a city which had been renowned for its fidelity to the truth, from the earliest date. Euphrates, the bishop, having too much intercourse with the Arians, allowed himself to be seduced, and adopted their doctrines. In 346, the Pope convoked several bishops to examine the accused, and as they found Euphrates guilty, they deposed him and appointed Severin as bishop. Although raised to the episcopal dignity against his will, the holy man opposed the Arians with apostolic zeal, refuted their godless doctrines, and put them to shame in public disputations and in his sermons. This caused many to leave the city, converted others to the true faith, and brought to repentance those Catholics, who had been seduced by the heretics. In this manner, the purity of the Catholic faith was restored, and the church indemnified for all that she had suffered. Severin, to preserve the work he had begun, continued unweariedly in his zeal as long as he lived, never ceasing to exhort his flock to virtue and piety, both by precept and example. One day, when visiting the tombs of the holy Martyrs before the city, he saw the soul of St. Martin, brilliant with divine light, carried by Angels into heaven. This happened at the hour in which the holy Bishop died, as was afterwards known from those who were present at the death of St. Martin. This occurrence was a still stronger incentive to St. Severin to follow in the steps of the holy man, whose virtues he, for so many years, had endeavored to imitate.

How great a holiness our Saint attained, a hermit experienced to his confusion. This hermit was of royal lineage, and had left all the prerogatives of wealth and birth to go into a desert, where he led so austere and holy a life, that he was often visited by Angels, who exhorted him to perseverance. One day, probably instigated by the evil spirit, the thought took possession of him, whether there was any one on earth who lived more piously than he, or who could expect so great a reward as he. His Guardian Angel appeared to him, and said: "Yes there is such a one; it is Severin, bishop of Cologne." The hermit immediately went to Cologne, in order to learn what sort of life this holy bishop was leading. He found him at table, entertaining several persons of the nobility. Seeing the costly meats, the many servants waiting at the tables, and the magnificence of the hall, the hermit could not comprehend that one who, like himself, had left everything and lived so severe a life, should not be more holy and have a right to expect a greater reward than the bishop. The Angel, however, took

every doubt from him by saying: "Thou must know that this bishop, to say nothing of his other virtues, has his heart less fixed on all that he possesses, than you on your water-pitcher." This was enough to make the hermit understand that poverty does not so much consist in possessing nothing, as in not fastening our heart on what we possess. Further, that we can be just as holy in high stations and surrounded by honor, if we make use of it to the glory of God and to the salvation of souls, as in the contempt of all temporal goods. Hence the pious hermit esteemed the holy bishop still more, and humbled himself more before God than ever before.

Meanwhile, Severin not satisfied with the peace and prosperity of his own see, extended the efforts of his zeal to other dioceses. Being informed that the Bishop of Bordeaux had much to suffer from the heretics, he went to him and assisted him so effectually, that the heretics had no longer courage to disturb the pious bishop. The miracles which St. Severin performed in confirmation of the Catholic truths, filled the heretics with shame and disgrace, and the Catholics with joy and comfort. At last, it pleased the Lord of life and death to call His faithful servant to receive his eternal reward. Severin fell sick at Bordeaux, and as he knew by divine revelation that the hour of his death was approaching, he prepared himself for it by devoutly receiving the holy Sacraments. Having given his last admonitions to those around him, he gave his soul to the Almighty, in the year of our Lord 408. His holy body was at first buried at Bordeaux, but was afterwards removed to Cologne, and deposited, with great solemnity, in the Church which he had built in honor of the holy Martyrs St. Cornelius and St. Cyprian, which thenceforward took his own name and bears it to this day. Some relate that this removal took place when the Huns were destroying Bordeaux; while others maintain that a long-continued drought, with which Cologne was visited, had given occasion to it; for, it had been revealed to a pious priest that neither the city nor the surrounding places could expect rain until the relics of St. Severin had been brought to the city with all due honor. Hence the inhabitants sent a splendid embassy to Bordeaux to bring the holy body. The clergy and laity went forth from Cologne, in solemn procession, to meet it, and accompanied it devoutly into the Church prepared for its reception. No sooner was this done, than a long and fruitful rain rejoiced the city and the whole land. After this, many other miracles followed, which God performed, through the intercession of this Saint, at his shrine, on the blind, the lame and the infirm.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Severin, in his episcopal dignity, was surrounded by honors and riches, but also more dear to God than the hermit in his abject poverty. Virtue does not depend on the station in which we live. We can spend our days in wealth and honor, and yet save our souls, by not employing our riches to offend the Almighty, but to honor Him, and to benefit mankind; by not being proud of our station and despising others, but by remembering, with due gratitude, that all we possess comes from God, and was bestowed upon us by His hand. If, therefore, God has placed you in a higher station; if He has given to you, more liberally than to others, of temporal riches and honors, take this lesson to heart. Never fix your heart with immoderate love on temporal things, but employ them well, and serve God more faithfully than those to whom He has not given so much. "I exhort you, ye rich," says St. Basil, "not to love inordinately what you possess; think of your end, and moderate your desire to gather still more." "Honor the Lord with thy substance," admonishes the Wise Man, "and give Him the first of all thy fruits." (Prov. iii.) "Give alms out of thy substance," said Tobias to his son, "and turn not away thy face from any poor person; for so it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned from thee." (Tobias, iv.) "Charge the rich of this world," writes St. Paul to his disciple Timothy, "not to be high-minded, not to trust in the uncertainty of riches, but in the living God, who gives us abundantly all things to enjoy. To do good; to be rich in good works; to give easily; to communicate to

others; to lay up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the true life." (1 Tim. vi.) All these are exhortations which you should follow, if God has placed you above others, or has given you more temporal goods than to your neighbors; otherwise, you are in great danger of losing eternal possessions; for, St. Lawrence Justinian has rightly said: "They who have a superfluity of temporal goods lose very easily the heavenly and eternal possessions:" for, they either love their riches immoderately, or set themselves above others on account of them, or do not employ them as they ought.

II. St. Severin endeavored to regulate his life after the example given him by St. Martin, especially after he had seen the soul of this Saint gloriously received into heaven. There are persons in this world who, in the same station in which you are, serve God most faithfully, and lead a truly Christian life, although their number is not large. Cast your eyes upon these, and follow them; not on those who live in such a manner that you would not like to die with them. Consider the life of those Saints, who lived in your station; and saved their souls. See how they conducted themselves, how they worked out their salvation, and think for yourself: "Have these lived piously in such a station? have they observed the laws of God and of the Church? have they guarded themselves against sin, and practised good works? Why then should not I be able to do the same!" "We ought to regard the life of the pious, in order to regulate ours accordingly," writes St. Gregory. St. Basil says: "The written his-

tories of the Saints, which have been left us, are pictures of good works, which we ought to imitate. And as an artist who would copy a picture frequently rests his eyes upon the model, in order to copy it

truly, so ought we, who would live virtuously, turn often to the lives of the Saints, and thus impress their virtues into our hearts, and follow them."

TWENTY-FOURTH DAY OF OCTOBER

ST. RAPHAEL, ARCHANGEL.

This holy Archangel, sent by the Almighty to Tobias, himself explained who he was, in the following words: "I am the angel Raphael, one of the seven who stand before the Lord." Several authors maintain that he is one of those heavenly spirits who constitute the first and highest choir, and are called Seraphim. He is generally called an Archangel like St. Michael and St. Gabriel. Our knowledge of him is taken from the book of Tobias, the substance of which is as follows: Tobias, one of the captive Jews at Ninive, a good and faithful servant of God, when old and blind, remembered that he had lent a sum of money to a relative named Gabelus, living in the city of Rages, in Media, and wished to send his son, the young Tobias, to collect it. But unwilling to send him alone, he bade him go and seek a travelling companion to bring him safely to the place of his destination and back again. Hardly had the youth gone into the streets of Ninive, where he lived, to seek one, when he saw a beautiful young man standing girded as if ready to set out on a journey. This youth, as will be seen, was St. Raphael. Tobias asked him who he was and if he knew the road to Rages. Raphael answered that he was the son of the great Ananias, and knew well the way to Rages, and had made his abode with Gabelus, an inhabitant of that city. Tobias rejoiced and told it to his parents, who called the youth before them, and asked him whether he would conduct their son to Rages and back again for fair wages. Raphael consented, promising to do as they desired. The two youths then set out on their journey. After the first day's march, Tobias rested on the bank of the river Tigris, and when he went to wash his feet in this river, an immense fish came suddenly up to devour him. When he called to his companion for help, Raphael told him to seize the fish courageously and draw him to land. Tobias did so; after which Raphael told him to open the fish, take out the entrails, and keep the heart, liver and gall, as

useful medicines. They continued their journey, and took lodgings in the house of Raguel, who was of the same tribe as Tobias and who had an only daughter, named Sara, whom Raphael advised Tobias to take to wife. Tobias feared to do this, as he had heard that Sara had already been given in marriage to seven husbands, all of whom had been killed by the devil. Raphael, however, said: "Hear me, and I will tell thee who they are, over whom the devil can prevail. It is they who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from their heart and mind. Tobias exactly followed the directions of his holy companion, and remained unharmed. From how many evils would persons about to be married be saved if they had first received and followed suitable instructions from their pastors who, in regard to them, take the place of Raphael, advising them what they should do in order to enter the state of holy matrimony properly prepared. They should purify their heart by a good general confession and be married, not like heathens in the darkness of night, but at mass receiving the blessing of the priest at the altar. After marriage they should live as becomes the marriage state, faithfully fulfilling the admonition of St. Paul, sanctifying each other and taking care that their children shall become without delay children of God through baptism. Indeed how much displeased must be the guardian Angels of new-born children at seeing them, through the neglect of their parents to have them baptized in time, left in the power of the devil, in original sin and in danger of eternal perdition. While Tobias remained at the house of Raguel, his heavenly companion went to Rages, demanded and received without any hesitation, the borrowed money from Gabelus, returned to Raguel and having made a short stay there, accompanied Tobias back to his home at Ninive.

Anna, Tobias' mother, had meanwhile, grieved very much at the long absence of her son. She daily went to a high mountain and looked into the distance, to see whether her son was coming; and when, on the day of his return, she saw him from afar, she ran to her husband and informed him of his son's coming. Being blind, Tobias gave his hand to a servant and went to meet his son, as also did Anna. Both fell on his neck, kissed him and wept for joy. Having all entered their house, they adored the Almighty and gave due thanks to Him for the happy issue of the journey. Tobias, the son, then took some of the gall of the fish, and anointed his father's eyes, as the Angel Raphael had told him to do before they had reached the house; and immediately the blind father recovered his sight. Indescribably great was the joy of the father, the mother, the whole household and neighbor-

hood. Having given humble thanks to God for this new grace, Tobias told his parents how many benefits he had received from his travelling companion. "He conducted me and brought me safe back again," said he; "he received the money from Gabelus, he caused me to obtain my wife, and he chased from her the evil spirits and gave joy to her parents. Myself he delivered from being devoured by the fish; thee also, father hath he made to see the light of heaven, and we are filled with all good things through him. What can we give him sufficient for all these?" Before his father could answer, he begged him to give so faithful a companion, as recompense, one-half of all the things they had brought. Tobias acceded to this proposal of his son without hesitation, and calling the Angel, they both begged him to accept one-half of all the things they had brought, as a recompense for his services. But the Angel said to them: "Bless ye the God of heaven; give glory to him in the sight of all that live; because he hath showed mercy to you. For it is good to hide the secret of a king; but honorable to confess and reveal the works of God. Prayer is good with fasting and alms, more than to lay up treasures of gold; for alms delivereth from death, and the same is that which purgeth away sin and maketh us to find mercy and life everlasting. But they that commit sin and iniquity, are enemies to their own soul. When thou didst pray with tears, and didst bury the dead, and didst leave thy dinner, and hide the dead by day in thy house, and bury them by night, I offered thy prayers to the Lord. And because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee. And now the Lord hath sent me to heal thee, and to deliver Sara thy son's wife from the devil. For I am the Angel Raphael, one of the seven who stand before the Lord." Having thus spoken, the holy Archangel was silent, but Tobias and his son were seized with fear, and fell trembling, with their faces to the ground. The Angel cheered them, with the words: "Peace be to you; fear not. For when I was with you, it was by the will of God: bless ye him, and sing praises unto him. It is time now that I return to him that sent me: but bless ye God, and publish all his wonderful works." Having said these words, he vanished from their sight. They, however, lay prostrate on the ground for three hours, partly from fear, partly in wonder at the great goodness of God who had sent so high a prince of heaven to protect, comfort and help them. At length, having overcome their fear, they repeated their thanks to God, and announced everywhere, the benefits He had bestowed on them. The beautiful hymn of praise which Tobias composed on that occasion is to be found in Holy Writ. From this event, as true as it is wonderful, several histo-

rians, not without reason, conclude that the intercession of St. Raphael ought to be invoked by those who are either troubled or tempted by the Evil One, who are blind, or otherwise infirm, or who go on a journey. The name, Raphael, means "the remedy, or the physician of God," and shows that this holy Angel assists particularly those who are sick, either in soul or body. The true Church teaches those who intend to undertake a journey to pray: "May the Angel Raphael be with us on our way!" from which we infer, that he is the especial patron of all travellers.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. No more useful lesson can I give you to-day than that which St. Raphael has given. Read therefore, carefully the first instructions that young Tobias received, and learn from them how and to what end men ought to enter matrimony, and what they ought to avoid. Most memorable are those words in which he explains why the seven husbands of the pious Sara had all been strangled by Satan. The devil had power over them on account of the unchaste thoughts with which they entered the state of matrimony. Much greater, however, is his power over those who, under the pretext of their future marriage, commit sin without any compunction, because they pretend that they are already united before God, which is false, and can only have emanated from the spirit of hell, the father of lies, to ruin thousands of souls. The devil has power over those who act on such criminal principles. And what can be expected for those over whom the devil has power? Can such people promise themselves that their marriage will be happy and have God's blessing, or can they expect eternal salvation, unless they do severe penance?

II. From the second instruction which St. Raphael gave to the old as well as to the young Tobias, learn, first, that we must give thanks to

God and praise Him for all benefits received; and learn, secondly, how agreeable to the Almighty and how useful to men are prayer, fasting and alms. Whoever practises these, is more happy than he who gathers the greatest treasures of gold and silver; for gold and silver can save no one from eternal death, cleanse him from sin, or open heaven to him; while, according to the angel's words, alms and other good works cleanse and save man.

III. Consider what the holy Angel says of those who commit sin: "They are enemies to their own souls," which, after God, they should hold most dear. The sinner himself does more harm to his own soul, than all men, all demons can do: and because he is an enemy to his own soul, he is also an enemy to his own body: for when the soul is lost, whither can the body go? Certainly, not to heaven, but to hell.

IV. Learn that the good works done by men are offered by the holy Angels to the Almighty, and are not lost, though they are not immediately followed by a reward.

Lastly, understand well why the pious Tobias was visited with blindness. "Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee," said St. Raphael. Hence, it is no sign that we are forsaken by God, or that

we are not in favor with Him, when we have to suffer, although we lead a pious life. "The misfortunes	which assail the pious, are a proof of virtue, and not a sign of divine anger," says St. Gregory
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TWENTY-FIFTH DAY OF OCTOBER.

ST. CHRYSANTHUS AND ST. DARIA, MARTYRS.

St. Chrysanthus is one of the many who have experienced how useful and beneficial is the reading of devout books, especially the Gospel. He was born of heathen parents. Polemius his father, stood so high with the emperor, that he was raised to the dignity of a Senator. Chrysanthus' greatest pleasure was reading; and one day, by special Providence, the Gospel fell into his hands. He read it through most attentively; but not being able to comprehend it, he secretly requested a Christian to explain it to him. This Christian procured him an opportunity to speak to Carpophorus, a holy and very learned priest, who explained to him all he desired to know, and, with the divine assistance, succeeded so well, that Chrysanthus recognized the falsity of the heathen gods, as well as the truth of the Christian religion, and having been properly instructed, he received holy baptism. After this, he appeared no more at the heathen theatres and sacrifices, but associated with Christians, which awakened in his father the suspicion that his son either desired to adopt the faith of Christ, or perhaps was already enrolled among the number of the faithful. He called him to account, and as Chrysanthus fearlessly confessed the truth, the angry father cast him into a damp and dark prison, determined to let him die there of hunger. As, however, after a few days, he found him as strong as ever, and as firm in confessing Christ as he had been before, he resorted to other and more horrible means to compel him to forsake Christ. He confined him in a room most luxuriously fitted up, and sent several wicked young women to tempt him, believing that this would be the easiest manner of bringing him back to idolatry. When the first of these women entered, and the chaste Chrysanthus became aware of her intention, he cried loudly to God for assistance, most solemnly declaring that he would much rather die than offend Him. He endeavored to flee, but the room was locked. Hence he did all that was possible under the circumstances. He turned his face

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away, shut his eyes and closed his ears with both hands, while he continued to pray to the mighty God for assistance. His prayers went to heaven; for the woman was suddenly seized with so invincible a drowsiness, that she sank to the floor, and was carried out of the room. The same happened to the second and the third; and the Saint, recognizing the hand of the Almighty in it, gave due thanks to heaven. Polemius, however, ascribed it all to witchcraft, and sought in another manner to compass his design. He persuaded Daria, a virgin consecrated to the service of Minerva, to marry his son, in order to draw him gradually away from the Christian faith and bring him back to the gods. Daria consented, and Polemius bringing her to Chrysanthus, introduced her as his future spouse. Chrysanthus, conversing for some time alone with her, told her that he was a Christian, and making her acquainted with the reasons which had induced him to become converted, he succeeded, by the grace of God, in making her promise to embrace the true faith. Not satisfied with this, he explained to her how priceless a treasure chastity is, adding that he was determined to preserve it unspotted. He also said to her that he was willing to marry her, to give her the opportunity of becoming a Christian, but only if she was willing that they should live in perpetual continence. Daria consented cheerfully, after which Chrysanthus announced to his father that he was ready to make Daria his wife. Polemius, greatly rejoiced, ordered a splendid wedding, after which the newly-married couple lived as they had agreed upon, in virginal chastity. Soon after, Daria was secretly baptized, and endeavored to lead an edifying life with her spouse. Both assisted, to the best of their ability, the oppressed Christians, and also used every opportunity to bring the infidels to the knowledge of the true God. For a time they were not molested; but when, at length, Celerinus, the Governor, was informed of their conduct, he gave Claudius, the Prætor, orders to investigate the matter. Hence, Chrysanthus was brought into the Temple of Jupiter to sacrifice to the idols, after the manner of the pagans. As he refused to do this, he was scourged so dreadfully, that he doubtless would have died, had not God preserved him by a miracle. After this, he was dragged, laden with heavy chains, into a dark hole, into which all the sewers of the prison emptied. Being locked up in this foul place, the holy man called on the Almighty, and suddenly the darkness around him gave away to a heavenly light a delicious odor filled the air, and he was freed from his heavy chains. Claudius, in consequence of this and other miracles, desired to be baptized,

with his wife, his two sons, and a great many soldiers who were under his command. The emperor was greatly enraged when this news was reported to him, and ordered them all to be thrown into the Tiber, with heavy stones tied to their necks. Meanwhile, Daria also was imprisoned on account of her belief in the Christian faith. She evinced, however, no less fortitude than her holy spouse. She was taken into a house of ill-repute to be a prey to wicked men. Daria, in this danger, called on the great protector of the innocent, and God caused a lion to break from his place of confinement and come running to her, as if to guard her from all harm. When the first man entered the room where the chaste virgin was, the lion seized him, threw him to the ground, and then looked up to Daria, as if to ask her whether he should kill him or not. The tender martyr helped the trembling youth to rise, and reproaching him for his wickedness, she exhorted him to do penance, and succeeded in persuading him to become a Christian. The same happened to two others, who, like the first, left her converted. The tyrant raged when he heard of it, and commanded fire to be set to the room in which Daria was, that she might be burnt with the lion. When the fire was kindled, Daria made the sign of the holy cross over her protector, the lion, and sent him away through the flames uninjured. She herself also remained unharmed, though the room was burnt to ashes. Many other miracles were wrought by her and by St. Chrysanthus, in consequence of which a great many heathens were converted. At last, both were sentenced to be thrown into a deep pit outside the city, where, covered with stones and sand, they were buried alive, in the year 284.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. St. Chrysanthus shut his eyes and closed his ears with both hands, that he might not see nor hear those who had been sent to tempt him. Oh! how wisely he acted! Numberless persons have fallen into vice and have been precipitated into hell, because they did not guard their eyes from gazing on dangerous persons and objects; or because they listened to flatteries or to impure words and songs. Death came upon them through eyes and ears, like a thief</p>	<p>through the window. If they had turned their eyes away and closed their ears, if they had left those who spoke immodestly and sang lascivious songs, they would not have become guilty of sin, and would not have been cast into the depth of hell. The pious king David would not have fallen, if he had not been careless in the use of his eyes. And where would he be, if he had not done penance? The beginning of the misfortunes which assailed the strong Samson, and</p>
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which ended in his death, was his gazing upon Delilah. Sichem, a noble prince, was tempted to sin, as we are told in Holy Writ, by looking upon the imprudent Dina, and being soon after murdered, was cast into hell. We omit innumerable others whose ruin began in the same manner. Each of these shall cry out, during all eternity: "My eye," (my ear) "has wasted my soul" (Lament. iii.). Imprudent looking about and listening robbed them of their innocence, their piety, the grace and friendship of God, and at last, of salvation. If you do not wish to experience the same, keep your eyes, your ears, and in fact all your senses under control. "Hedge in thy ears with thorns," admonishes the Wise Man, "hear not a wicked tongue." (Eccl., xxviii.) "Those who listen voluntarily to sinful speeches, give death permission to enter through the window," writes St. Theodore. "The eyes are the leaders of sin," says St. Jerome. "To preserve purity of heart, it is necessary to keep a guard over our exterior senses," says St. Gregory.

II. St. Chrysanthus and St. Daria were thrown into the greatest danger to sin. They were tempted, but without their fault. They resisted, called on God, and did all in their power not to yield, and God protected them from consenting to do wrong. As these Saints were subjected to exterior temptations, so are many souls tempted interiorly; some through their own fault, others without the reproach of the slightest guilt. To the former belong those who spend their time in idleness; who are intemperate in eating and drinking; who neglect prayer and other good works; who, without reason, seek dangerous company, assist at indecent plays, read unchaste or sensa-

tional books; who look at persons immodestly dressed or at unclean pictures; who like to listen to, or indulge in improper jests, or songs; who play indecent games; delight in wanton dances and amusements; make friends and acquaintances of persons of little or no virtue; in short, those who in their manners and actions, dispense with Christian modesty. All these can blame only themselves when they suffer from unclean temptations; they themselves give occasion to them. But there are many who, though they avoid all this, are still violently tempted, as was the case with many Saints in this world. These are not to be blamed for their temptations, as they have not, by their conduct, occasioned them. The former have every reason to fear that they will commit great sins in consequence of the temptations which they themselves have caused; for it is written: "He that loveth the danger, shall perish in it" (Eccl., iii.). No one will believe such people when they say that they are sorry to be troubled by such temptations. If this is the truth, why then do they give occasion to them? To imagine that these temptations can easily be overcome, without the divine assistance, is presumption; for, God has nowhere promised His aid to those who throw themselves into danger. They are not worthy of it. What else then, can they expect but that they will frequently fall into sin, and finally into hell? Quite differently must those be judged who are tempted without their own fault. If they do all they can, and pray to God for help, they will not be overcome, but may be assured that the Almighty will assist them, as they manifest their love and fidelity to Him by avoiding everything that may lead them into

temptation. And who can believe that God will forsake His faithful servants in their fight? For the two Saints, whose festival we celebrate to-day, and for many others, He worked miracles to protect them in their danger. Hence, never give occasion to temptations; and if they nevertheless assail you, trust

in God; call on Him, and resist bravely. The whole of hell will be unable to conquer you; for, the Almighty will be your protector. "He is a protector of all who trust in him." (Psalm xvii.) "He is a protector in the time of trouble, and the Lord will help and deliver them." (Psalm xxxvi.)

TWENTY-SIXTH DAY OF OCTOBER

ST. CRISPIN AND ST. CRISPINIAN, MARTYRS; AND STS. ANDRONICUS AND ATHANASIA, HERMITS.

The festival of the two holy Martyrs, Crispin and Crispinian is celebrated on the 25th of this month; but we give their history to-day, because that of Sts. Chrysanthus and Daria was sufficient for yesterday's reading. According to the testimony of the Roman Martyrology, these two Saints were brothers, of a noble family of Rome. Not contented that they themselves had been educated in Christianity, they endeavored also to win others to the true faith. With this intention they went to Soissons in France, and to be better concealed from the persecutors of Christianity, they learned to make shoes, hoping that this would give them better opportunities to become acquainted with the heathens and to convert them to Christianity. Their hopes were not deceived. They were so clever in making their shoes, asked either no pay at all, or very little for their work, and treated every one so politely and kindly, that they were universally beloved and esteemed. They forgot not, however, their principal object, but whenever it was possible they spoke with those, who came to them, of religion, and exposing the blindness of heathenism, they explained the truth of Christianity with so much success, that they converted more infidels than others did with long sermons.

The two holy brothers continued thus undisturbed in their apostolic labors, until, after the lapse of several years, some hardened idolaters were informed of it, who immediately went to the Emperor Maximian, and denounced them as enemies of the gods and disturbers of the old religion. The Emperor sent a written order to the prefect Rictiovarus to imprison Crispin and Crispinian and duly to punish them. Rictiovarus had both brothers brought before him, asked whence they came, and why they so-

journed in Soissons. They answered: "We are noble Romans, and compassion for the blinded people, who by worshipping false gods, would make themselves for ever unhappy, brought us hither. We have endeavored to show them the way of salvation by bringing them to the knowledge of the only true God of heaven and earth." The prefect, incensed at this speech, menaced them with most horrible tortures if they refused to deny their God and to sacrifice to the idols. "We do not fear your menaces," said the holy brothers; "it is our desire to suffer for Christ's sake." Rictiovarus, unwilling to contend any longer with them, ordered them to be put upon the rack, and to be severely scourged; after which, sharp irons were driven between their finger-nails and the flesh, and large pieces cut out of their backs. During this terrible martyrdom, the holy men called to heaven for grace and help, and God sent an Angel to them, who took the irons out of their fingers. The tyrant, not being able to comprehend how this was done, after the custom of the heathens, ascribed it to magic and became still more angry. Without loss of time he had a large cauldron brought and filled with melted lead, into which he ordered both the holy martyrs to be thrown, not doubting that they would thus die a most painful death. But the same God who had manifested His power in so many other dreadful martyrdoms, showed also in these two brothers, that His arm had not lost its strength. Crispin and Crispinian sat quietly in the cauldron, without any signs of suffering, and with a loud voice praised God. Rictiovarus became almost beside himself with rage, but had to pay dearly for his cruelty; for when he went near to see if they were not practising some deceit, a drop of the molten lead struck his eye and gave him indescribable pain. Notwithstanding this, he would not relent, but ordered an immense fire to be built and both the Saints to be cast into it. The Angel, however, who had already miraculously assisted them, brought them unharmed out of the flames. Hereupon, as some writers affirm, Rictiovarus became like one who had lost his senses and in despair threw himself into the fire, thus miserably perishing, both body and soul.

The Emperor, when informed of this, gave orders that the fearless brothers should be beheaded. The saints, rejoicing at this sentence, knelt down at the place of execution and received the stroke which set their souls free. Their holy bodies were left a prey to wild beasts, in accordance with the imperial command; but they remained untouched, till some courageous Christians carried them during the night from the place of execution and buried them with due reverence. How pleased God was with the zeal and constancy of these holy brothers, He has manifested to the whole world by many miracles wrought at their tombs.

To the lives of these holy brothers, I will add the history of a pious couple, whose memory will be celebrated in this month, although on another day. These are St. Andronicus and St. Athanasia, who lived at the time of Theodosius the Elder, in the city of Antioch, rich in temporal possessions, and pious in all their actions. From the time of their marriage, they divided their yearly income in such a manner, that they gave one part of it to the poor, another to the maintainance of the religious in the convents, the third they used for their own household, which they had arranged suitably to their station. God blessed them with two children, a son and a daughter, after which they lived in continence in order the better to serve the Lord. Twelve years had they lived thus piously, when it pleased the Almighty to prove their fidelity by many deep sorrows. On one day they lost both their children, their son in his twelfth, their daughter in her tenth year. Andronicus manifested a brave heart under this heavy misfortune. Submitting to Providence, he said with Job: "The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away. Praised be the name of Lord!" Athanasia, however, would not be comforted, but remained, after the burial of her children, sitting beside the grave, in the church of the holy martyr Julian, and wept without ceasing until midnight. At that hour, the saint appeared to her, saying: "Why dost thou disturb those that sleep here, with thy tears? Weep rather over thy sins, than over the loss of thy children; for they are with God in heaven and live in never-ending bliss." This heavenly messenger took all grief from Athanasia and filled her heart with comfort. She went home, related to Andronicus what had happened, and added that she had determined to pass the remainder of her life in a convent, and weep over her sins. Andronicus was greatly pleased with this pious resolution; but proposed that they should reflect on the subject for eight days: if, after this time she had not changed her mind he would throw no obstacle in the way. Both prayed most earnestly to learn the will of God. When the appointed time came, Athanasia informed her husband that her resolution was unchanged, and he told her that he would follow her example. Congratulating each other, they waited for an opportunity to carry their wishes into effect. Andronicus went to the father of Athanasia and informed him that he intended to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem with her, requesting him to administer his property until their return. He added that if God prevented their coming back, all their possessions should be sold for the erection of a convent or an hospital. After this had been arranged, the pious couple dismissed their servants and quietly set out on their pilgrimage, most piously employing their time in praying and beg-

ging the Almighty to lead them to a place where they could serve Him most perfectly. When they reached Alexandria, Athanasia, out of devotion, desired to remain a few days, and Andronicus repaired to the holy abbot Daniel, to be advised by him where they should pass the rest of their lives and fulfil their desire to serve God. The holy man wished Athanasia to come to him, and when Andronicus brought her, he sent her into the desert of the Tabenna, where she was received among the recluses and numbered among the handmaidens of the most High. Andronicus remained in the monastery of Daniel, where he led so holy a life, that he was an example to all the brethren.

After twelve years had thus passed, Andronicus felt an inner desire to visit the holy places at Jerusalem, for which the Abbot willingly gave his permission. At the same time, Athanasia was moved with the same desire, and received the consent of her Abbess; but she was cautioned to wear the habit of the monks, in order to be more safe. Husband and wife commenced their journey, but neither of them knew the movements of the other. When Athanasia had been for some time on the road, she saw in the distance, a monk sitting under a tree; she soon recognized Andronicus, but gave not the slightest sign that she knew him. Austere fasting had so thoroughly changed her appearance, that Andronicus did not know her. He asked her whither she was going, and when Athanasia answered that she was going to Jerusalem to visit the holy places, he said that he had the same intention, and offered himself as a travelling companion. Athanasia accepted the offer with pleasure, and piously continued her way with him to Jerusalem and back again. Andronicus was quite convinced that his pious and virtuous companion was one of the Egyptian hermits, and earnestly desired that their days might be spent together. Athanasia was not unwilling, but desired that he should first ask the advice of the holy Abbot Daniel. After their return, Athanasia made her dwelling in a retired cell, and when Andronicus had obtained the Abbot's permission, she received him, and for twelve years they led a most holy life. Daniel, who visited them frequently, encouraged them to continue in their fervor.

When they had thus lived peacefully and piously for twelve years, St. Daniel, coming one day to visit them, was met by Andronicus, who told him with tearful eyes, that his beloved brother was mortally sick, and to all appearance would soon die. Daniel, on entering the cell, found that indeed Andronicus' fears were well founded, and administering the holy sacraments to the sick, he remained with her until the Lord had received her soul. Before her end, she requested St. Daniel to read, after her death,

a letter which he would find under her pillow and to show it also to Andronicus. The holy man did as he was desired, and discovered that the late pious hermit was no other than Athanasia, the spouse of Andronicus. The astonishment of Andronicus, as well as of the other hermits, was beyond description. The inhabitants of Alexandria, as well as the hermits who lived in the neighborhood, came to see the Christian heroine, who had led so wonderful a life. Andronicus spent the rest of his days and closed his eyes in the same room where his holy spouse had lived unknown with him for so many years.

The reader will hardly ask for miracles after reading the above; for truly, they wrought great wonders, who, leaving their large fortune, chose a poor and austere life and dwelt so many years in the strict observance of chastity. The heroic self-control of St. Athanasia, in not making herself known to him, whom during so many years she had loved so deeply, is a miracle of Christian fortitude. Learn from it how strong man is when the grace of God is within him. Learn how wonderfully God brings His elect to perfection and salvation. Learn how we must conquer ourselves and persevere in the path of virtue. Parents, who lose their children early, as also all those who, on account of temporal adversity, are immoderately sad, should ponder the words of St. Julian to the sorrowing Athanasia: "Weep rather over thy sins, than over thy dead children. They are in heaven, enjoying eternal bliss; how then canst thou weep so bitterly over them?" Let us weep only in sorrow for our sins: then our tears will be useful. Hence St. Chrysostom says: "Let us weep only over our sins; but bear all else with a fearless heart; whether it be poverty, sickness, early death, or other sorrows."

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. What will not be done through love of God and the desire to win souls for heaven? The two brothers, Crispin and Crispinian, not able to convert infidels by preaching, learn the shoemaker's trade, and thus try to find opportunities to speak kindly to the heathen, make them acquainted with Christian truth, and show them the way to heaven. Have you ever endeavored to exhort your neighbors to do good or to restrain them from evil? Alas! have not your conversations</p>	<p>sometimes restrained others from doing good and led them to sin? It is a fact, that evil conversation corrupts good manners, while good conversation may do much to amend evil manners. Examine yourself to-day and see what conversation you are accustomed to have with others. Repent where you have done wrong, and make the resolution that you will not only yourself abstain from sinful discourses, but will also prevent others from indulging in them</p>
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in your presence. If you remember that, by your frivolous speeches, you have given others occasion to sin, seek now to do good by your edifying discourses. "Let no evil speech proceed from your mouth, but that which is good to the edification of faith"; admonishes St. Paul. (Ephes., iv.) This, as St. Chrysostom explains, means: speak only that which is not sinful, and which serves to edify others. "Let all bitterness," continues St. Paul, "all anger, indignation and clamor and blasphemy be put away from you." The meaning of this is, that you should abstain from all sinful speeches, as bitter, angry, indignant and blasphemous words. St. Clement of Alexandria writes: "We ought entirely to abstain from all sinful speeches; and those who indulge in them we should silence by an earnest or averted face, or by a sharp reproof."

II. Do you not think that Ricciovarus, the prefect, acted very foolishly when, in his rage, he cast himself into the fire, and thus miserably ended his life? But will you not act just as foolishly, if, by sin, you throw yourself wantonly into the fire of hell, where your body and your soul will be ceaselessly tormented? Our two holy

martyrs rather allowed themselves to be cast into the fire, than offend God by forsaking the true faith. How wisely they acted! Had they done the contrary, they would have been in danger of being precipitated into fire which is never extinguished. You are not threatened with fire or with molten lead, and yet you offend the Almighty, who menaces you with an unquenchable fire. Is not that a sign that you either do not believe in hell, or that you have lost your reason? Consider your dreadful folly, and correct it. It will be very useful to you to think frequently of hell and of the fire which is never extinguished; for the thought of this is an efficient means to save you from it, because it will keep you from committing sin. St. Chrysostom writes: "None of those, who often think of hell, will lose their souls; while, on the contrary, none of those, who do not heed hell, will escape it. How many discard all thought of hell, not to be disturbed in their sinful conduct, and by so doing, precipitate themselves into the eternal flames! Hence, I beg of you, think frequently of hell, as it will prevent you from doing wrong."

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY OF OCTOBER.

ST. VINCENT, ST. SABINA, AND ST. CHRISTETA, MARTYRS;
ST. ELESBAN, KING AND CONFESSOR.

At the time of Dioclesian and Maximian, Dacian, a bitter enemy of the Christians, received the command entirely to exterminate the Christian religion in Spain. This command was most punctually executed by Dacian; he sought everywhere for the Christians, and rested not until they had either denied their

faith or had been killed by different kinds of torment. Coming to Evora, he was informed that a lad of the name of Vincent lived there, who publicly and without any hesitation confessed himself a Christian. Dacian had him seized and asked him how he could have become so blind as to receive so contemptible a faith, from which he had nothing to expect but shame, disgrace, torment and pain; and whether it would not have been much wiser to have kept that faith, which was held by the emperor and all the nobility of the land? Vincent answered the tyrant with Christian candor, and made it clear to him, with great eloquence, that the Christian faith was not contemptible, but that on the contrary, it brought true honor, immortal glory and eternal happiness, while the worship of idols, being against all reason, would surely prepare, for those who practised it, eternal derision and unhappiness. Indignant at this answer, Dacian ordered Vincent to be brought forthwith to the statue of Jupiter, and if he refused to offer sacrifice after the customs of the land, to be scourged until he lost either his obstinacy or his life. The executioners, who took Vincent to the statue, had pity on his tender age and exhorted him to spare himself and obey Dacian. The lad did not even deign a reply, but silently walked on. Having arrived before the image, he stepped upon a large stone that was standing there. The stone gave way under Vincent's feet as if it had been wax, and the lad's foot-prints remained impressed upon it; the soldiers, awed at this, exclaimed loudly: "The God of the Christians must be the true God, as He gives a child power to melt a hard stone." They could not make up their minds to execute Dacian's order, but led the boy to the prison, and then informed the tyrant that he had demanded three days' time for consideration. They then went and sought instruction in the Christian faith, and were baptized. Meanwhile Vincent was visited in prison by his two sisters, Sabina and Christeta, who grieved and bitterly lamented that they were about to lose him, and that they would then be in great danger of losing their honor and innocence. They begged him, therefore to flee from the prison, and go with them where they might all serve God unknown and in peace. Vincent allowed himself to be persuaded, escaped from the prison and went with his sisters to Avila, where for some time he served the Lord most zealously. On the way thither he regretted that he had forfeited the priceless crown of martyrdom for the sake of his sisters, but consoled himself with the hope of obtaining it at some other time and sharing it with them. Hence he exhorted them fearlessly to give their life and blood for Christ's sake, should their fidelity ever be tested. Both promised their

brother all he demanded of them, and indeed they kept their word; for when Dacian came to Avila and was informed that Vincent, who had already been arraigned at Evora, never appeared at the sacrifices with his sisters, but publicly boasted of being a Christian, the tyrant immediately ordered all three to be seized and tortured. They were taken to prison, and so fearfully racked, that all their limbs were out of joint. After this, they were whipped until they were covered with blood and wounds. The three holy martyrs, however, were not only fearless under this barbarous torture, but cheerful and happy. They praised God and gave Him thanks, ready not only to suffer for His honor, but to die a thousand deaths for Him. This Christian heroism was intolerable to Dacian, and he ordered their martyrdom to be ended by the crushing of their heads. Accordingly they were dragged, one after another, to a large stone, on which their heads were laid and beaten with clubs till they were crushed and the brains dashed out. In this inhuman manner, Vincent, Sabina and Christeta ended their young lives, and obtained the never-fading crown of martyrdom. The holy bodies were ordered to remain in the open field as food for wild beasts; but the Almighty, who, according to Holy Writ, had the body of a Prophet guarded by a lion, also protected the bodies of these holy martyrs until they were buried by a few Christians and by a Jew, who had been converted by witnessing the manner in which these Saints had borne their terrible torments. When the persecution of the Christians was finally ended, a church was built on their tombs in their honor.



The Roman Martyrology mentions also to-day, with great praise, the holy King Elesban, who reigned in Ethiopia, and manifested great zeal in disseminating the Christian faith. The Homerite Arabians, who dwelt in the neighborhood, were governed by Dunan, a wicked man, who perpetrated acts of great cruelty on the Christians. Elesban wrote to him several times, endeavoring to dissuade him from persecuting the faithful; but as the tyrant continued in his cruelty, our pious king determined to make war against him. A holy hermit advised him to obtain the divine assistance by the intercession of the holy martyrs; and the king, having followed this advice, obtained a complete victory over the enemy. Dunan was so utterly undone, that he bound himself with chains of gold, and went with his intimate friends to meet King Elesban, and voluntarily surrendered himself. After this glorious victory over the cruel enemies of the Chris-

tians, Elesban gained a still more glorious one over himself. Desiring to serve the Almighty more perfectly, and to be more certain of the salvation of his soul, he renounced the throne, and sent his crown to Jerusalem, consecrating it to the King of Kings. Having given large alms to the poor, he went into a monastery and led a holy life until his end. What was most admirable in his life in the monastery, was his great austerity in fasting; for after having enjoyed the abundance of the royal table for many years, he then took only dry bread, wild herbs and water; and yet he became more healthy, with this severe abstinence, than he had formerly been, with the choicest viands of his costly table. His death, like his life, was precious in the eyes of the Lord.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

I. St. Vincent, St. Sabina and St. Christeta suffered cheerfully the most cruel martyrdom at a very tender age. What would you have done had you lived at that period, and had been threatened by a tyrant with the most terrible pains in case you would not forsake the true faith? God only knows! Perhaps, while reading the lives of the holy martyrs, you wish that you had lived at that time and had had an opportunity to manifest your love of Christ as they did. Perhaps you regret that such opportunities exist no longer. But read what St. Augustine writes: "Let no one say that in our time, the conflicts of martyrdom are ended; for we still have martyrs. To control anger, to shun unchastity, to preserve justice, to despise avarice, to humble pride, is, in many respects, a martyrdom. Opportunities are never wanting to suffer such kinds of martyrdom; and consider it well: you are obliged to endure this kind of martyrdom by your faith as a Christian and by the fear of eternal punishment. Prove therefore, by your actions, that your wish to be a martyr comes from your heart.

Endeavor to bridle your tongue; bravely resist your evil inclinations; avoid unchastity, avarice, pride and other vices which are the sources of innumerable evils.

II. The holy king, Elesban, desiring to serve God more perfectly, and more surely to save his soul, voluntarily laid aside purple and crown and sceptre, and passed his remaining years in great austerity and holiness. What are you doing to obtain everlasting salvation? How do you employ the time which the mercy of the Almighty has vouchsafed to you, in order that you might serve Him and thus walk in the path which leads to heaven? Ah! if the lost had the opportunity which you have to work out your salvation, what would they not do? Consider this question well, and resolve to avoid everything that may impede your way to heaven, and to devote the rest of your days to the service of God, and to gain salvation. "For it is, in truth," says St. Chrysostom, "the greatest folly that we do not take as much care to save our souls, as the evil one does to make us for ever unhappy." The devil takes

all possible pains to deprive our soul of that happiness for which it was created. Why then should we not earnestly endeavor to bring it to the end of its creation, and thus procure for it unending happiness? He esteems our souls so highly, that to obtain them, he offers all the kingdoms of the world, as we read in the Gospel that he offered to the Saviour all the glory and treasures of the world, and said to him: "All these I will give

thee, if, falling down, thou wilt adore me" (Matth., iv.). Why do we ourselves think our souls of so little value, that we sell them for a mere gratification or a trifling gain? "How blind must the rage be," says St. Salvian, "which possesses us, to regard our souls of so little consequence, when Satan esteems them so precious a treasure?" If you value your soul, take better care for its salvation.

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY OF OCTOBER

ST. SIMON AND ST. JUDE, APOSTLES.

St. Simon, whose festival the Catholic Church commemorates to-day, was surnamed the Cananæan or Canaanite, because he was born at Cana, a town in Galilee. In this town, Jesus wrought his first miracle, by changing water into wine, as is known from the Gospel. Nicephorus and some others are of opinion, that Simon was the bridegroom whose wedding our Lord and His holy Mother honored with their presence, but that he afterwards left his bride with her consent and followed Christ. St. Jude, the brother of Simon, is called Thaddæus to distinguish him from the other Jude or Judas' who betrayed and sold the Lord. According to Nicephorus, Mary Cleophas was their mother, and James the Less their brother. Other writers say that Simon and Jude were not brothers. The Gospel tells us that both Simon and Jude were chosen by Christ as Apostles; but when or under what circumstances this took place, is not recorded, nor have any particulars of their words and actions been left us. There is, however, not the slightest doubt that they, as all the others, constantly followed the Saviour, and although they forsook Him when He was taken prisoner, they had, after His resurrection the grace to see Him frequently, to be present at His Ascension, and to receive the Holy Ghost on Pentecost.

When, later, the Apostles separated to preach the Gospel, St. Simon went to Egypt and St. Jude to Mesopotamia. Both however, were also in other lands, to preach the word of Christ,

and after thus spending 30 years in apostolic labors, they met again, by divine dispensation, in Persia. On their arrival in this land, they found the Persian army in the field; for the King had declared war against India, and was in the act of marching against it. Baradach, the general in chief, had offered many sacrifices to the gods, desiring to know the issue of the war; but no answer was given, which had always been given before, as the Evil spirits spoke through the idols. Hence Baradach, amazed at such unusual silence, sent to another idol which was kept in a place far from the camp, and desired to know the reason of it. Satan, answering through it, said, that the presence of two Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ was the cause of the silence of the gods, as the power of these two Apostles was so great, that not one of the gods, until now so greatly honored, dared to appear before them. Baradach, having received this answer, had the two Apostles brought before him. He met them with great manifestations of respect and listened to them while they spoke to him of the nothingness of the gods which he worshipped. As he was desirous to know the issue of the war, they made use of the occasion to show him how false were the words of the idols and hence how groundless was the notion of their divinity. They bade him propose his questions to the idols, through the magicians as usual, and told him that they would give his gods permission to speak. The magicians were ordered to ask the gods, and returned with the answer, that the result would be a long, bloody, and disastrous war. The Apostles having heard this, said to Baradach: "Now, great prince, recognize the falsity and the deceit as well of your magicians as of your gods. A deputation of the Indians will arrive to-morrow, at this hour, in your camp, to request peace of you on whatever conditions you may choose to prescribe."

Baradach, surprised at these words, awaited with great impatience the following day. At the very hour the Apostles had foretold, the Indian embassy came humbly begging for peace, which was forthwith concluded.

This event was reported to the king, who resided at Babylon. He called the Apostles into his presence, listened with great attention to their words, and after having been sufficiently instructed in Christianity, was baptized by his holy teachers. The example of the king was followed by the whole court and a great part of the city. After this, the holy men went through the other towns and villages of the kingdom, everywhere preaching the mysteries and truths of the Christian faith. Many thousands became converts, only the magicians and for-

tune-tellers remained in their blindness, and seeing, with deep resentment, that they were everywhere despised and derided, they sought means to kill the holy Apostles. To this end, they excited the inhabitants of a town, which was far distant from the residence of the king, against the Saints, who had no sooner arrived there than they were seized and dragged, the one before an idol of the sun, the other before that of the moon, and were commanded to offer incense. The holy men refused to comply with so wicked a demand, saying that they sacrificed only to the true God; after which they began to preach the Gospel. But the furious Pagans refused to listen to them, and in their rage, cut St. Simon asunder with a saw, and beheaded St. Jude. In this manner these two holy Apostles ended their lives and earned the glorious crown of martyrdom.

I cannot pass over in silence an event which took place while St. Simon and St. Jude preached the Gospel. The daughter of a noble Persian became the mother of a child, and said that a deacon of the Apostles was its father. The truth of this was not doubted, and the deacon was brought before the king. The holy Apostles, knowing that he was innocent, went to the king, and desired that the parents of the slanderer and the child should be summoned. When they appeared, one of the Saints asked the infant, in the presence of the king and the parents, whether the deacon was its father. The child answered loudly and distinctly: "No! the deacon is innocent." The king and all present thanked and praised the Almighty who had so miraculously saved His servant. The parents, begging pardon of the latter, as well as of the Apostles, requested that the child should be asked who was its father, but the Apostles said. "We come not to accuse the guilty, but to protect the innocent:" This great miracle was not only instrumental in increasing the esteem in which the holy Apostles were held, but was also the means of converting many heathens, and strengthening the faith of those who had already embraced Christianity.

It has further to be remarked that we have, in Holy Writ from the pen of St. Jude, a short but powerful Epistle, in which he admonishes the faithful to guard themselves against those who, having forsaken the true Church, preach heresy; to remain constant in their faith, and to practise diligently all virtues, especially charity, chastity and purity. Luther rejected this Epistle from Holy Writ, though St. Augustine had counted it among the inspired books more than a thousand years before, and also several Councils had declared it

canonical. Without doubt Luther was actuated by the fact that he, and such as he, are painted with living colors in the same Epistle.

In the life of St. Bernard we find that this Saint had a particular devotion to St. Jude. He received, with extraordinary joy and veneration, the relics of this holy Apostle which were sent to him, and, on his death-bed, he requested that they should be laid on his breast and be buried with him.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. More than thirty years did the holy Apostles work with unwearied zeal for the salvation of souls. Thousands of dangers, persecutions, nay, even death they did not fear, bearing everything joyfully, filled only with the thought of saving souls. What incited them to this? Doubtless, the love of Jesus Christ, who had ransomed those souls with His precious blood, and also pity, as they knew that, blinded by their error, these people would lose eternal life. St. Jude, in his epistle, exhorts us to have compassion on all those who are seduced by the heretics, and to save them from the fire, that is, from the fire of hell. "But others save, pulling them out of the fire; and on others have mercy." (Jude, xviii.) To-day I request you to have pity on your own soul. "Have pity on thy own soul," says the Wise Man. (Eccl., xxx.) Your soul has been bought with the priceless blood of Christ: esteem it accordingly, and take care that the blood of your Saviour may not have been shed for it in vain. Your soul, in its sin, is in the greatest danger of being cast into eternal fire. Have pity on it, and drag it forcibly from the precipice on which it stands. It is your soul, your own immortal soul, so dearly bought by Christ, given to you

to guard and keep it. If you gain the life to come, your soul will be forever happy; but, if you lose it, your soul will eternally suffer in hell. Who will be injured by this but you? Therefore, commit nothing which may draw after it eternal punishment, and leave nothing undone which may aid you in obtaining the glories of heaven. It is your soul. "Have pity on your own soul!"

II. St. Simon is brought to the idol of the Sun, and St. Jude to that of the Moon, with the command to sacrifice; and, when both declare that they sacrifice only to the true God, both suffer martyrdom. Can you also say, with truth, that you sacrifice only to the true God? How many hours, how much labor, trouble and care have you sacrificed to vanity and pride, to the world, the flesh and the devil? Do you consider that less punishable than to offer a few grains of incense to a lifeless image? Oh! learn to despise this way of conducting yourself, and endeavor to live in such a manner that you may truthfully say that you offer sacrifice to the true God alone. Offer to the Almighty, early in the morning, all your thoughts, words and actions, all your cares and labors, and all that you may have to suffer during the day. During the day, offer to Him

the incense which is most agreeable to Him,—that of prayer and good works. Offer Him your self-abnegation, the control of your evil inclinations, especially anger, impatience, and curiosity. Offer your self-conquest, by forgiving those who wrong you ; by abstaining from unchaste and slanderous conversation ; from intemperance in eating and drinking,—in one word, from everything displeasing

to Him. Offer to Him, especially at night, a repentant and contrite heart, a heart ready to serve Him zealously and constantly. “ A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit ; a contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise ” (Psalms, l.). “ It is a wholesome sacrifice to take heed to the commandments, and to depart from all iniquity.” (Eccl., xxxv.)

TWENTY-NINTH DAY OF OCTOBER.

ST. NARCISSUS, BISHOP OF JERUSALEM AND ST. MALCHUS, CONFESSOR.

It would be a difficult task to find a bishop, who governed the flock entrusted to his care so many years, and who reached so high an age as St. Narcissus ; for, he administered the church of Jerusalem with apostolic zeal, during 80 years, and reached the 106th year of his age. He was born at Jerusalem, in the first century of the Christian Era. From his youth he manifested a great desire to obtain the knowledge of divine truth, and was unwearied in acquiring it. As soon as he was ordained priest, he was so zealous in instructing the Christians, in proclaiming the word of Christ, in visiting the sick and in the spiritual labors required by his position as a minister of the Lord, that on the death of the Bishop of Jerusalem, he was chosen to succeed him. Invested with this dignity, he redoubled his zeal, and his daily labor consisted in preaching, instructing and exhorting, by which he endeavored to strengthen those under him in the true faith, to keep them from evil and incite them to all good. He was an enemy to vain and empty pastimes, and would never hear of amusements or bodily comforts. In his speech, he observed a wonderful care and prudence ; he detested all empty conversations as a loss of precious time. No one was allowed to utter sinful words in his presence ; and as a watchful shepherd, he was constantly guarding his flock from the raging wolves, the heretics. As much as he was hated by the latter, so much was he beloved by the former. His learning, virtue and holiness made him esteemed and venerated by all, and his fame was augmented still more by the many miracles which the

Almighty wrought through him. Among other things, it is said that once, at Easter, he changed water into oil, some of which was kept over a hundred years, as by the use of it many sick were immediately restored to health. Notwithstanding this, some wicked inhabitants of Jerusalem dared to accuse the holy bishop of some great crime, to revenge themselves for having been punished by him for their misdeeds. They even had the audacity to confirm their malicious calumny with oaths and imprecations; one wishing that he might be burned alive if he did not speak the truth; the second, that God might punish him with leprosy, or some other terrible disease; the third, that he might lose his sight. The holy man, seeing himself so grossly calumniated, forgave his enemies from the depth of his heart, but refused to remain in the city. Secretly going away, he went into a far distant wilderness, where he lived in solitude, his only occupation being prayer, meditation, and devout reading. God, however, made the innocence of His faithful servant known by the punishment of his calumniators. The house of the first suddenly took fire, and both he and His family were burned in it; the second was seized with so dreadful a leprosy, that until the end of his life, he could not appear among men; the third, seeing his two companions so terribly punished, repented of his crime, and confessed the wrong done to the bishop; openly declaring that the accusation against the holy man had been a malicious slander. His contrition was so great, that from the continual tears he shed, he at last lost his sight.

Meanwhile, the inhabitants of Jerusalem were much grieved at the flight of their bishop, and took the greatest pains to find him. At last, however, they desisted from their fruitless search, and elected another bishop, who governed them for a few years and then died piously. On the very day on which this bishop expired, St. Narcissus came to Jerusalem, as God had admonished him to return to his see and to labor again earnestly for the salvation of souls. The joy with which the holy man was received cannot be described. He then resumed his episcopal functions and administered them many years with his former zeal. At length, enfeebled by great age, ceaseless labors and austerity, he prayed to the Almighty, either to relieve him of his mortal body or to send him some one who could assist him in his work. God heard and graciously answered his prayer. St. Alexander was travelling at that same time from Cappadocia to Jerusalem, to visit the holy places; and in the night before his arrival, God revealed to St. Narcissus that, on the following day, a strange bishop would come to the church, who would be his assistant, and in course of time, his successor. St. Narcissus imparted this

revelation, at break of day, to the clergy, and going with them to meet the bishop, he received him with great kindness, and informed him of the divine decree. Alexander, although at first greatly amazed at St. Narcissus' words, obeyed the command of God, received the charge which the Almighty laid upon him, and assisting St. Narcissus to the best of his ability, furthered with great zeal, all that this holy man undertook for the welfare of his fold. St. Narcissus, greatly comforted that the Almighty had granted his prayer and sent him so zealous a coadjutor and successor, continued untiringly, as long as his strength permitted, in the fulfilment of his apostolic labors, until at last, at the advanced age of 106 years, he was called by a happy death into the Kingdom of Heaven. The Roman Martyrology says that this saintly bishop was remarkable for his holiness, patience and strong faith.



The above mentioned book records, on the 21st of this month, the name of St. Malchus, whose life was written by St. Jerome, who had been well acquainted with him. Malchus was born at a poor village, called Maronia, about thirty miles from Antioch in Syria. His parents were farmers, and living very piously, early led their son into the path of virtue and piety, by word as well as by example. When however, they desired that Malchus should take a wife, he secretly left his home, and went to the hermits in the desert of Chalcis, where he lived a chaste, austere and holy life. After many years, some one brought him news that his father had died and that his mother was sad and lonely. Malchus determined immediately to repair home, to assist his mother and, after her death, to give one part of his possessions to the poor, another to the building of a monastery, whilst the remainder would suffice for his own support. The pious Abbot, whom he made acquainted with this plan, endeavored to dissuade him from putting it into effect, saying that thus he endangered his body and his soul. But Malchus would receive neither counsel nor admonition, and set out on his journey home. His road lay through a dense forest which was made extremely unsafe by the Saracens who robbed travellers, or carried them away into slavery. To be safer Malchus joined some other persons who were to traverse the forest. Hardly, however, had they travelled half of the journey, when they were attacked by a great number of Ishmaelites on horseback and on camels. Some of the travellers saved themselves by flight, others were killed, and the rest taken

prisoners. Among the latter were Malchus and a woman, who were seized by an Ishmaelite, bound upon a horse and thus carried off into slavery. Malchus now recognized, when it was too late, the mistake he had made. When he arrived at the dwellings of the Ishmaelites, he was charged with the care of a flock of sheep on a lonely mountain. With a sorrowful heart, he submitted to the will of Providence, and turning his imprisonment and the work entrusted to him to the best advantage, he endeavored to lead an edifying life. Most of his time he occupied in prayer and meditation; and he offered to God everything he had to suffer as an atonement for his sin, of which he ever repented from the bottom of his heart. The Ishmaelite who had captured Malchus seeing how carefully his flocks were guarded, began to become attached to his good slave, and, in order to retain him more securely, wished him to take as a wife, the woman who had been taken captive at the same time. Malchus was horrified at this proposal, not only because he determined to live in perpetual chastity, but also, because he knew the woman was married and that her husband had been taken by another Ishmaelite whom he served as a slave. Hence, he said to his master, that he was a Christian, and as such, could not take a woman who already had a husband. The barbarian, enraged at not being obeyed, without any hesitation, drew his sword and threatened to kill him, if he did not immediately comply with his command. Malchus apparently consented, and thus satisfied his master. But as soon as he was alone with the woman in the hut which had been assigned them, he was very unhappy and wept bitterly; he even went so far as to say that he would take his own life rather than unite himself to a married woman; as to die in chastity seemed much easier for him than to commit so horrible a crime. The woman who was also a pious Christian, restrained him from destroying himself, by representing to him that they might remain together in Christian charity and harmony, and yet live in perfect chastity. Malchus, on hearing this proposal, breathed freely once more; and both lived for some time together, in great peace and innocence, which they obtained from God by continual and fervent prayer. The Ishmaelite was well satisfied, and discarded all his former suspicions that his slave would escape. Meanwhile Malchus often thought, with deep regret, of his quiet sojourn with the pious monks, whom he had so unwisely abandoned. His companion, perceiving his sadness, asked him the reason of it. Malchus informed her of it; whereupon she made the proposal that they should secretly escape. This was a very dangerous undertaking; but by the grace of God it succeeded. They left the hut in the darkness of night and made all possible

speed. Coming to a river, they swam safely across. On the third day, however, they perceived two men riding on swift camels who seemed to be pursuing them. They trembled with fear, being convinced that the riders were either two servants of their master, or the master himself accompanied by a servant. The fugitives knew that death would be their punishment, if they were overtaken. Not having any other resource, they called on God to assist them. To escape by flight was impossible; hence they endeavored to hide themselves, and seeing a cavern which was of considerable width and depth, they entered it, though not without fear that it might be the abode of some wild animal which would tear them to pieces. On entering it they found a hole on one side, in which they concealed themselves. The riders, who were in fact, their master and one of his servants, saw them go into the cavern, and having arrived at its mouth, both dismounted. The servant went into the cave, with his sword drawn, calling on the fugitives with a loud voice. Not seeing them, he called their names with all his might. A lioness, which was at the further end of the cavern with her young ones, probably fearing that she would be robbed of them, came at one bound out of the darkness, attacked the servant, killed him with one bite and dragged his bleeding corpse into the depth of the cavern. The master, without knowing anything of this, thought that the fugitives were fighting with the servant, and ran also with his naked sword into the cavern, uttering loud imprecations on his servant for allowing himself to be kept at bay so long by the fugitives. The lioness, called again out of her retreat by these loud cries, tore him in pieces, as she had done to the other. All this was witnessed by Malchus and his companion, with fear and trembling, as they knew not what might happen to them; and it is easy to imagine how fervently they called on God for help. At length, venturing forth from their hiding-place, they found the two camels and a good supply of provisions. Having appeased their hunger, they mounted the camels, and, in a few days, arrived at the Roman Camp. Sabinus, the General, bought the camels of them and allowed them to continue on their way. Malchus returned to the monks in the desert, and placed his companion in a nunnery. St. Jerome writes that all these facts were related to him by St. Malchus himself. How holy a life he led after his escape from so many dangers, how deeply he repented of his fault and how humbly he thanked the Almighty for his wonderful assistance, need not be told. On account of the many and distinguished virtues, which he continued to practise until his end, he has been invoked and venerated since his death as a Saint.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. What you have read of St. Narcissus is another proof that the most innocent and holy men are not secure against the calumnies of the wicked. It is also another reason for never believing calumniators, especially when they attack a priest, or a man who is known to have always led a devout life. Who would not have thought true, what three men affirmed with an oath? And yet it was false. Hence you do very wrong, when you heedlessly believe the false reports which a calumniator disseminates about your neighbor. How you have to act when some one assails your honor, I told you on the twentieth of this month; and you can again learn it from St. Narcissus. Contemplate here also the punishment of the three calumniators, and let it teach you that God does not always allow such wickedness to pass unpunished even on earth. Secondly, observe how horrible a false oath is in the eyes of the Almighty; and thirdly, that God sometimes lets the evil come to pass which men wish themselves. To take an oath is, in itself, no sin. When there is a necessity, or good and sufficient cause, we can take an oath without sin. A false oath taken deliberately is always a great sin, be the cause to which we testify with an oath ever so little; since it is an insult to the Almighty, making Him a liar, or witness to a lie. The three calumniators of St. Narcissus made themselves guilty of great sin by their oath, because they knowingly swore falsely. They, at the same time, cursed themselves, and God allowed their curses to be fulfilled. Hence, hold in abhorrence cursing, lying and slandering; because through them we become guilty of great sin. "Let not thy mouth be

accustomed to swearing," says the Wise Man; "for in it there are many falls. Everyone that sweareth and nameth God, shall not be wholly pure from sin. A man that sweareth much shall be filled with iniquity, and a scourge shall not depart from his house. And if he swears falsely, his sin shall be upon him, and if he dissemble it, he offendeth doubly; and if he swears in vain, he shall not be justified; for his house shall be filled with his punishment" (Eccl. xxiii.).

II. St. Narcissus abhorred all idle talk as an irretrievable loss of time. Numberless persons do not regard such frivolous discourses as wrong, either because they do not think of the account they have to render of their words, according to the words of Christ (Matth. xii.), or because they do not consider the consequences that frequently follow. "Whoever wishes to be free from sinful discourses, must avoid frivolous discourses," says St. Chrysostom. For idle words lead to sinful words. And even if they do not, at times, go so far, yet the time employed in them is lost. This loss ought to be well considered by us, as it is a great loss. St. Bernard writes: "No one ought to esteem lightly the time spent in frivolous conversation; for it is valuable time, it is the time in which to work out our salvation. The irrevocable speech passes, and so passes the irretrievable time, without our being aware of what we lose. They say: Let us talk a little while, until the hour has passed. Oh! until the hour, the time has gone by! the hour, which the merciful Creator gives us to do penance, to obtain pardon for our sins, to gain everlasting glory; the time which you ought to have used to appease the Divine Majesty,

to hasten to the company of the angels, to sigh after the lost heritage, to animate your cold devotion and to weep over your past sins." May you not be one of these silly persons! Do not misuse your time in frivolous conversations. Employ it to that end and aim for which it was given by the Most High.

III. From the life of St. Malchus learn how wrong it is to follow our own inclinations, and despise the advice or admonitions of others. Hence the elder Tobias gave the following counsel to his son: "Seek counsel always of a wise man" (Tob. iv.). And the Holy Ghost exhorts us saying: "My son, do thou nothing without counsel, and thou shalt not repent when thou

hast done" (Eccles. xxxii.). And again: "He that is wise, harkeneth unto counsels" (Proverbs, xii.). St. Bernard writes on the same subject: "Whoever considers himself his own master," (which means, who follows his own head in everything and despises the counsel of others), "gives himself to a fool as disciple." Learn further, how to submit in all circumstances to the divine decrees, and to turn them to your own benefit; how you must act when, without any fault of your own, you are in danger of offending God; and lastly, how miraculously God protects the lovers of chastity. This last point St. Jerome dwells upon especially, as a wholesome lesson.

THIRTIETH DAY OF OCTOBER.

ST. MARCELLUS AND HIS SONS, MARTYRS; AND ST. QUINTIN, MARTYR.

St. Marcellus, mentioned to-day in the Roman Martyrology, was a centurion, or captain over a hundred, in one of Trajan's legions. The bravery he had manifested in many battles had made him a great favorite with his General; but he was still more beloved by the Almighty on account of the edifying and Christian life which he led, though surrounded by wicked people. He did not, for a long time, make it known that he was a Christian; but when the imperial army in Gallæcia, a province of Spain, was celebrating the birth-day of the emperor Dioclesian with great festivities, and offering the usual sacrifices to the gods, Marcellus confessed he was a Christian and could not take part in their worship. This frank confession caused him to be immediately seized and brought before Agricolaus, commander of the imperial body-guard. When asked whether he was in truth a Christian, Marcellus replied fearlessly: "Yes, I am a Christian, and nothing will induce me to abandon Christ." Agricolaus, unwilling to dispute with him, sentenced him forthwith to die by the sword. Marcellus, thankful for the grace vouchsafed him to die a martyr, willingly bowed his head to receive the fatal stroke.

He had twelve sons, all of whom he had carefully brought up in the Christian faith and prepared for martyrdom. When they, after the death of their father, were presented to the Governor and admonished by him to forsake their faith, there was not one among them who did not show himself ready rather to die than become faithless to Christ. The heroic example of their father had made so deep an impression on them, that they were not to be intimidated: hence they were deemed worthy to die the same death which had obtained for him everlasting life. The Governor sentenced them all to be beheaded. The joy, which they manifested when they arrived at the place of execution was so great, that even the heathens could not hide their astonishment. Their pious mother, Nonna, was now left alone. When she was told of the death of her husband and children she rejoiced greatly and gave thanks to the Almighty for the grace which He had vouchsafed to them. Her only desire was that God might deem her worthy to die the same death, and she prayed constantly to be united again with her loved ones. Her prayer was heard by the Almighty. She did not die a martyr, but a pious Christian, a faithful handmaid of the Most High; for, her life had been one continued exercise of all Christian virtues.



To this history of a Roman Centurion we will add a brief sketch of the life of a Roman Senator, although his festival belongs not to this day but to the following. We speak of St. Quintin, who ended his life by a glorious martyrdom in the third century. He was already a Senator when he was received, by means of holy baptism, into the pale of the true Church. At first, he kept his conversion a secret; but some time later he revealed to the holy Pope Cajus, his great desire to disseminate the Gospel in foreign lands. St. Cajus praised his zeal, and gave him, as companion, St. Lucian. Both, leaving all their possessions, travelled to France, where Quintin remained at Amiens, while Lucian went further into the district of Beauvais. Quintin preached the Gospel of our Saviour Jesus Christ, with apostolic defiance of all danger, and converted a great many heathens. He extended his zealous labors into the surrounding country, and the many miracles which he wrought, by divine power, on the blind, the lame, the possessed and the infirm, proved to the pagan inhabitants that the Saint preached a truly divine doctrine. Hence the number of the faithful increased daily.

Rictiovarus, the Roman Governor of France, was informed of St. Quintin's labors by the idolatrous priests, who feared the entire downfall of idolatry. He came himself to Amiens, called St. Quintin into his presence, and finding him firm in his faith, ordered him to be whipped like a slave. The holy Martyr, with eyes raised to heaven, thanked the Almighty for the great grace of being allowed to suffer for Christ's sake. During his martyrdom, a voice from heaven was heard, saying: "Remain constant, Quintin, for it is I who suffer in thee. I will assist thee and give thee strength." At the same moment, the executioners were cast down to the ground, as if struck by lightning. The governor, enraged at this, ordered the Saint to be cast into a dark dungeon until the next day; but in the midst of the night, an Angel appeared to Quintin, broke his chains and led him to the public square of the town, where, at break of day, the martyr preached a most powerful sermon to the people, who came running towards him from all parts, and many of whom were converted.

Rictiovarus, on hearing of it, became furious with rage and ordered the holy martyr to be stretched upon the rack, and to be beaten with clubs. When his whole body was covered with wounds, boiling oil and melted tar were poured over him, and he was burned with torches. Quintin showed himself not only fearless under this cruel torture, but cheerful and happy. The spectators of the terrible scene, however, began to murmur against the barbarity of the governor. The latter, therefore, ordered Quintin to be taken from the place of execution, and led away, on the next day, to another city, whither he himself followed to torment him anew. There two iron bars were thrust into his body, from his neck to his thighs, and his hands and feet were pierced with nails. But he who had given this barbarous order was again shamed; for, the Saint, miraculously strengthened by the Almighty, showed himself more firm and cheerful than before. Hence nothing remained but to behead him, and when this was about to take place, a voice was again heard, which coming from heaven, said: "Come, Quintin, my servant, and receive the crown thou hast deserved by thy martyrdom." The tyrant remained, unmoved, and the Saint received the fatal stroke, in the year of our Lord, 287. His holy body was cast into the river, by command of the Governor, but being afterwards miraculously found, it was buried with great honors. Rictiovarus was not long after this, deservedly punished for his wickedness, as has already been related in the lives of St. Crispin and St. Crispinian.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Marcellus and his twelve sons entered heaven by martyrdom. The pious mother followed her spouse and children, not crowned as a martyr, but as a faithful Christian. How glorious an example! Father and mother, with their twelve children, all saved, in heaven! none lost, none condemned! Whence this great happiness? Marcellus and Nonna lived piously, instructed their children carefully, and taught them by their own conduct. The children followed their parents, received their instructions, and conformed their lives to the example before them. Hence, all were saved, all went to heaven. How different is the result, when the parents are careless in the instruction of their children, and when they do not walk before them in the right path, or when children do not follow their parents and receive not their instructions. Therefore, on the day of judgment, there will be a great separation between parents and children. The parents will stand on the right and the children on the left; or the children on the right and the parents on the left. Or, perhaps, one part of the children will stand with one parent among the elect, the remainder with the other among the condemned. If parents and children would be saved together, then the former must endeavor to keep their children, by word and example, in the right path, and the latter must conform their lives in accordance with the precepts of their parents.

II. St. Quintin, in truth, suffered many and great torments. His martyrdom was not ended all at once by the sword, or on one day. He had to suffer different torments during several days. What, however, are these tortures compared with those of hell which he es-

caped? "Take fire, sword, wild beasts, and everything you can imagine, and it will all be less than a shadow compared with the tortures of hell," says St. Chrysostom. The reprobate has not only to suffer many, but all possible tortures in hell. He is not tormented for many days, but for all eternity. Thus are you taught by the true faith. "In heaven," says St. Augustine, "is to be found all that is good and nothing that can be called an evil. All that we wish, yes, even more than we can wish, we shall find there, and nothing that we do not wish." This means that in heaven is all happiness, honor, joy, and nothing that might give us pain, fear, or anxiety. On the contrary, in hell is everything that gives heart-ache and pain, and nothing that rejoices or that brings comfort and consolation. The principal point of all this is: The happiness, honors, and joys of heaven are eternal, and so are the sufferings, the pains of hell. This we are taught by the word of God. What I now ask of you, for the sake of your salvation, is this: think frequently on these most important truths, especially when you are tempted to sin or have to suffer. If you were assured that, immediately after you had become guilty of sin, you would have to endure such tortures as St. Quintin suffered, or that you would at least be in danger of being thus tormented, would you commit the sin? Certainly not. The impending martyrdom, nay, only the danger of it, would restrain you. And why, then, does the thought of hell not prevent you from committing sin, though you may be precipitated into it immediately after? Would you then not suffer incomparably more than St. Quintin did, although his tortures were so terrible? Think of

this whenever you are in danger of sin. And if you are subjected to many and heavy afflictions, let me ask you: Did St. Quintin act wisely to endure his dreadful martyrdom patiently, nay, even cheerfully, in the thought that by it he not only escaped hell, but obtained the eternal joys of heaven? His torments were terrible, but they ended at last. The joys of heaven are so great, that all suffering on earth, as the Apostle assures us, is as nothing when compared to it (Rom.

viii.) The best of it is, however, that they are endless, while all earthly suffering has an end. May you, therefore, act as wisely as St. Quintin did; and that you may act thus, represent to yourself the following truth: Through my suffering I may escape hell, and, instead of it, obtain the never-ending joys of heaven. "The misery which you suffer here, is short and soon ended," says St. Gregory: "the glory you expect will be everlasting."

THIRTY-FIRST DAY OF OCTOBER.

ST. WOLFGANG, BISHOP OF RATISBON, AND ST. MAXIMILIAN, BISHOP OF LORCH.

Among the bishops celebrated in the tenth century of the Christian era, on account of their virtues and the miracles God wrought by them, the church justly ranks St. Wolfgang, bishop of Ratisbon. He was a native of Suabia, and was born of noble parents. It seemed to his mother, more than once, before he was born, that she had brought forth a bright star; which, without doubt, indicated that she should give life to a son, who, by the brightness of his virtues and learning would illuminate the whole world. Wolfgang received his first lesson in the abbey of Reichenau, where he made the acquaintance of Henry, a noble youth of Wurzburg, who, when returning to his home, took Wolfgang along on account of his piety. At Wurzburg, Wolfgang made so much progress in all the higher branches of study, that he was greatly esteemed by every one. Henry was chosen some years later, bishop of Treves, and as he knew the virtue and learning of Wolfgang, he prevailed upon him to come to the same city. Wolfgang consented, on condition that Henry would not raise him to any dignity, but trust him with the education of the young; as he was greatly interested in this, knowing how much, in after life, depends on the first instructions received in childhood. Henry promised all that Wolfgang asked, and the latter applied himself zealously to teaching. He bestowed special care upon the poor, whom he not only instructed

without charge but also provided with food and clothing. He endeavored to impress upon his pupils the lesson given by Tobias to his son: to have God constantly before their eyes, to fear Him, and to avoid all sin.

Besides the laborious task of instructing the young, Wolfgang also undertook much other work for the benefit of the whole diocese; as Henry employed him as his assistant in all the duties of his episcopal office. When the pious bishop was taken away by death, Wolfgang returned to his home, and, desiring to serve God, he went into the Benedictine monastery of St. Meinrad, in Switzerland, where he led a most holy life. After his novitiate was ended, he was charged to instruct his younger brethren as well as the pupils in the monastery, in the liberal arts. St. Ulric, bishop of Augsburg, ordained Wolfgang priest, and God inspired him, at the same time, with the earnest desire to convert the heathen to the true faith. He had heard that the Christians in Hungary had greatly suffered from the invasions of the heathen; hence he determined to go thither and preach the gospel. Having received the permission of his superiors, he began his journey with great trust in God. At Passau, he visited bishop Peregrinus, who informed him to his great joy that he had resolved to make the same journey with the same object. Hence, they travelled together. Arrived at their destination, they left nothing undone to save souls; but seeing, after a time, that they could not be as useful as they had expected, they returned to Passau.

At that time, the episcopal See of Ratisbon had become vacant, and Peregrinus, acquainted with the great virtues and other distinguished qualities of Wolfgang, proposed him to the emperor and the clergy as a worthy successor of the late bishop. Wolfgang endeavored, by all means in his power, to prevent his being burthened with this dignity; but the abbot of the monastery, to whom he had vowed obedience, commanded him to submit to the decree of the Almighty, telling him he could manifest his zeal to save souls much better, and could work much more good, when invested with the authority of bishop, than when occupying an inferior position. Hence, Frederick, Archbishop of Salzburg, consecrated Wolfgang bishop, to the great joy of the whole city.

His first care was to prepare himself worthily to administer his episcopal functions; and to this end, he prayed and mortified himself. It was observed that he frequently passed the entire night in prayer at Church. He was extremely severe towards himself, and allowed himself not even the most innocent recreation. He aspired not after temporal goods; all his thoughts, his

whole mind strove only to gain heaven. He personally visited every parish in his diocese, and everywhere made such regulations as he deemed necessary to promote the honor of God and the welfare of his flock. By preaching almost daily and by incessant admonitions, he reformed the manners of the laity and clergy, being himself an example of every virtue. His revenues were not used for luxurious garments, nor to supply his table with superfluities, but to adorn the churches, as dwellings of the Most High, and to support the poor and assist the sick. He daily fed a great many poor in his own residence, and sent to the houses of others who were indigent, corn, money and clothes, without letting them know from whom the benefit came. Having heard, when he first became bishop, that one of his predecessors had withdrawn a considerable portion of the revenues of the monastery of St. Emmeram, he voluntarily returned the same. This and many other noble actions of the holy bishop procured him the highest esteem of his flock. Every one regarded him as a saint and showed him the highest honor. The Almighty Himself made him renowned by bestowing on him the gifts of prophecy, of healing the sick, and freeing the possessed. But his fame, which thus daily grew, and the honors which were showered upon him, distressed the humble bishop to such a degree, that he secretly left the city and went into a desert not far from Salzburg, where, for five years, he lived in abject poverty, leading rather an angelic than a human life. A hunter, who was chasing a deer in those parts, found him, at the end of that time, in a cavern, and made known his retreat to the inhabitants of Ratisbon, who had searched for him everywhere in vain. They immediately sent him a deputation of the chief men, who so long entreated him with words and tears, that at last they persuaded him to return to his See. He was received with great rejoicings, and brought into the church of St. Peter, where he was again placed upon the episcopal throne. The saint resumed the administration of his See, and continued most faithfully in it until his happy death.

Henry, at that time duke of Bavaria, would entrust the education of his sons and daughters to no one but to our holy bishop; and the result showed with how much wisdom and ability the holy man discharged so important an office. Henry, the first-born son, became a holy Emperor; Bruno, the second son, became a pious Bishop; Gisela, the eldest daughter, afterwards Queen of Hungary, was renowned for her virtue and piety, and Brigit died a most exemplary Abbess of a convent at Ratisbon. St. Wolfgang foretold to these princes and princesses their future stations; for while they were under his care, he called the

eldest prince, King or Emperor ; the second, Bishop ; the third, princess Gisela, Queen ; and Brigit, Abbess.

Having for more than twenty years administered his See, he was taken ill at Popping, when on his way to Upper Bavaria. He requested to be carried to the church of St. Othmar, a Saint whom he honored as his special patron. Having received the holy Sacraments with great devotion, he admonished all around him to lead a Christian life, ordered that all he had with him should be given to the poor, raised his eyes to heaven, prayed most devoutly, and, with every manifestation of joy, in the presence of a great crowd of people, gave his soul to his Creator, in 994. His holy body was brought to Ratisbon, and at first interred in the Cathedral, but afterwards removed to the Church of St. Emmeram, where it still rests, greatly honored by all the faithful. The many miracles which have taken place at his tomb, are fully described in several volumes.



To the life of St. Wolfgang, we will add that of another bishop and martyr, St. Maximilian, of whom the Roman Martyrology speaks on the twelfth of this month.

He was born in Styria, in the once celebrated town of Celaja, now called Cilly, of which at that period the greater portion of the inhabitants were heathens. His parents, famous for their high nobility and Christian virtues, gave their son, in his seventh year to the charge of a holy priest, named Oranius. Maximilian made so much progress under the guidance of this learned and pious master, that he was regarded with admiration, and greatly edified all by his conduct. He was scarcely thirteen years old when he lost his father ; and, six years later, his mother was taken from him. The liberty thus given him he nobly used to increase his virtues. He gave the large fortune which he had inherited to the poor, and began to lead a life of sanctity, and persevered in it with admirable constancy. Some years later, he went to Rome desiring to visit the tombs of the holy Apostles, Peter and Paul, and also to tender his services to the Vicar of Christ. Sixtus II., who reigned at that period, rejoiced at so pious an offer, ordained him priest and gave him power to preach the gospel, wherever he thought he could do good to souls. Maximilian returned to Germany and employed the power given him to the benefit of many. In the district of Upper-Austria, he remained a long time, and was indefatigable in converting the heathens who dwelt there to the Christian faith. In Lorch,

on the Danube, a town quite considerable at the time we speak of, he converted, with the aid of the Almighty, a great number of the inhabitants and led them in the path of virtue. Hence they desired a bishop and would have no other than Maximilian, whose apostolic zeal had delivered them from paganism and vice. The saint, who had no other desire than to save souls, consented to their wish, and, with the permission of the Pope, received the episcopal consecration. He was the brightest example of virtue to all under him and led them in the path of holiness. He especially exhorted them to observe those precepts of which I spoke in the life of St. Wolfgang: to think of God, to fear Him, and never voluntarily to offend Him. Twenty-seven years had the holy bishop unweariedly labored in the apostolic functions, when he felt an invincible desire to exterminate the last vestige of paganism in his native land; and he set out for it in the year 288. Hardly had he arrived at Cilly, when he heard that Eulassius, a heathen Roman Governor, was persecuting the Christians of the town, and that he left nothing untried to induce them to forsake their faith. Indescribable were the pains the bishop took to strengthen the Christians in their faith, and to prepare them worthily for their impending martyrdom. For some time, this was done only by words, but soon he had occasion to preach by his example; as Eulassius commanded that all the inhabitants of the town should under a heavy penalty appear, on a certain day, in the temple of Mars, the god of War, and there assist at the sacrifice. Maximilian, going to Eulassius upbraided him for this impious command, for his cruelty to the Christians, and, in the presence of a great many witnesses, placed the nothingness of his gods so clearly before his eyes, that no one could say a word against it. Eulassius, indignant at the Saint's fearlessness, ordered him to be brought into the temple and to be forced to sacrifice to the god, threatening him with the most cruel death, in case he refused obedience. The holy bishop now practised himself what he had taught to others. He thought of God whom he feared, more than all the menaces of the tyrant, and chose rather to die than offend Him by sin. Hence he was led out of the town and beheaded, by order of Eulassius, on the 12th of October, in 288. The holy body was secretly buried, on the following night, near the town by the Christians. After many years, St. Rupertus, the great apostle of Bavaria, bought it of the barbarians and removed it to a church which was built in honor of St. Maximilian. The Emperor Henry, of the house of Bavaria, afterwards had the sacred relics brought, with great solemnities, to Passau, where they are yet held in great veneration. It is related that Frederick IV., Roman Emperor,

gave his eldest son the name of Maximilian, having promised to do so when, by the intercession of this saint, he had been miraculously delivered from the enemy who besieged the castle in which he was. From that time the Saint's name has been given to many persons of high rank.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Wolfgang restores voluntarily to a monastery what had been unjustly taken from it by his predecessor. This was a praiseworthy action, and one which all those should follow, who knowingly possess anything that belongs not rightfully to them, even if they have not taken it themselves but have inherited it; for, it is certain, that we must return to the rightful owner what we have either taken unlawfully, or what we know belongs to him, though we did not take it. If this is not done, we cannot hope for forgiveness from God. If we do not return property not belonging to us, when it is in our power to do so, the penance we do is not a true but a false penance. "If we do not return what we have unjustly taken, our sin will not be forgiven," says St. Augustine. If the sin is not forgiven, there is no hope of salvation. How blindly, then, do they act, who, by injustice, deceit, theft, usury, or other sinful ways, appropriate to themselves the property of others, and thus seek either to enrich themselves or their children! For, firstly, they offend God by the sinful means which they use; secondly, they cannot retain, with a clean conscience, what they have wrongfully obtained, but must return it if they will save their souls. Of what use, therefore, is what they have thus obtained? Thirdly, they generally make themselves and their heirs unhappy on this earth; because what is wrongfully gained

does not last, but vanishes and often even drags that which was justly obtained with it. And lastly, such men cast themselves wantonly into eternal ruin; because they do not repair the damage they have caused. They may also cause their heirs to go to destruction; and this will be the case, when the latter come to the knowledge that what they have inherited is not rightly theirs, and will not return it to those who have been wronged. Take heed that you be not of the number of such blind and foolish persons. Think of the words of St. Ambrose: "It is better to possess no temporal goods and to gain salvation, than to possess great temporal goods and go to destruction. It is better that our temporal possessions decrease (by the return of what we possess wrongfully), than that we go, body and soul, to eternal ruin." If you refuse to return voluntarily, and to your own benefit, what you wrongfully possess, you will be forced to do so without deriving any good from it. According to the prophecy of Job: "The riches which he has swallowed, he shall vomit up, and God shall draw them out of his belly." (Job, xx).

II. Take notice of what St. Maximilian recommended to his newly converted flock, and St. Wolfgang to his disciples; the same which Tobias impressed upon his son centuries ago. If I ever desire to impress a lesson deeply into your heart, it is this very one. It con-

sists but of three points. The first is : Always have God before your eyes ; the second : Fear God ; the third : Guard against all sin. These three points contain the most useful lessons I can give you ; they contain all that is necessary to save your soul. Numberless men go to destruction because they have not God before their eyes, they fear Him not and guard not against sin. To escape eternal damnation and to gain Heaven, I entreat you most earnestly to make to-day the resolution to keep those three points always in your memory and to observe them continually. Have God always before your eyes. Do not forget Him. Keep ever in mind that God is always present ; that He sees, hears and knows everything. Fear God ; He is great, powerful and awful in His judgment. He can seize and punish you everywhere, at all times, and for all eternity. He is your Judge,

who will, one day, demand of you a strict account of all your works. You cannot oppose His wrath, nor flee from His might. Guard against all sin. Sin is an injury done to the Almighty. If you fear God, you will not dare to offend Him ; hence you will not sin. Sin alone can do you more harm than the Evil One himself ; it can eternally close the gates of heaven against you. Do you desire more reasons for avoiding it ? But remember that you must guard yourself against all sin ; for, one mortal sin may cast you into hell. The thought of the presence of the Almighty is the most efficacious means to guard yourself against all sin, as I have already told you. Hence, think always of God ; keep Him before your eyes ; fear Him. Avoid all sin. "This is the way" to heaven, "walk in it." (Isaias, xxx.)

NOTICE.—To-day is the last day of the month. Recall what I formerly recommended.

FIRST DAY OF NOVEMBER.

THE FEAST OF ALL SAINTS.

The Catholic Church, which, every day in the year, places some Saints before our eyes to honor and imitate, represents them all to us to-day; hence to-day's festival is called: The Feast of All Saints. The origin of it was as follows: There was, at Rome, a magnificent temple, which had been built before Christ, by Marcus Agrippa, and was called the Pantheon or Temple of all the Gods, because they were all worshipped therein. This idolatrous temple had not been torn down like many others, but Pope Boniface IV. consecrated it according to Catholic usage, to the Virgin Mother and all the Saints. To the greater edification of the people, he had many relics of holy Martyrs placed in it with due magnificence, whence this Church received the name of the Church of the holy Martyrs.

In after years, it was ordered by Pope Gregory IV. that, not only the festival of the holy Martyrs, but also that of all other Saints, should be celebrated in the above mentioned Church and in all Christendom.

The reasons for instituting this festival were the following: First, it cannot be doubted that the number of Saints who reign with Christ in heaven is very large. "I saw so large a number," says St. John, "that nobody could count them." To speak only of those who became martyrs for Christ's sake, they, according to authentic historians, already in the first centuries of the Church, numbered 17 millions. Who can count the other Saints, as well of the Clergy as the laity, who served God faithfully and died in His grace? The number of the Saints is very great, but most of them are unknown to us. We know the names of the holy Apostles, of many apostolic men, many founders of religious orders, many popes, bishops, religious, hermits, virgins, widows, married people, nobles, princes, kings and emperors; but there is a number far exceeding these, whose very names are unknown to us. And as it is but just that we, who are yet in the Church Militant and are united by the bond of charity with the Saints, should honor them duly, as they are honored as true servants

and friends by the Almighty Himself, the holy Church has appointed this day for honoring them all together, as it is not possible to consecrate a separate day to each of them. The second reason is contained in the prayer which the Church on this day recites in Holy Mass: "That on account of the great number of our Intercessors, God may bestow on us, more abundantly, the desired gifts of His liberality." No Catholic doubts that the Saints in heaven, because they enjoy the favor of the Almighty, can obtain for us by their intercession many graces, of which we are not worthy, on account of our sins. For, it is known that, while they were still living on earth, they not only averted much evil from mankind by their intercession, but also drew down many benefits upon them. That we may therefore obtain more surely all that we need or that is useful for our salvation, the holy Church has ordered that we shall to-day call upon all the Saints as our intercessors, trusting implicitly that the Most-High will not disregard the entreaties of so many of His friends. The third reason is as follows: The Church according to St. Bernard, represents to us so many Saints, in every station in life, to encourage us so that we may not only venerate them, but also imitate their virtues; and that as we call them blessed, so we too should strive after that salvation which they have already attained. Hence, also, the Gospel of the Eight Beatitudes is read to-day; as in it the road is pointed out and explained, by which the Saints have reached heaven; a road which we too must walk, if we wish to join them in heaven.

We will now explain, in few words, three other points, namely; what we ought especially to meditate upon, to learn and to do, on this day. In regard to the first of these points, we ought to meditate on the happiness of the Saints in heaven, and on the way they walked, or the means they employed to attain their blessedness. This blessedness, to say much in few words, is so great, that it can neither be described nor comprehended. "We can obtain it," says St. Augustine, "but cannot esteem it too highly. No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and it has not entered into the heart of man, what God has prepared for those that love Him," that is, for the Saints in heaven. The happiness of the least Saint in heaven is inexpressibly greater than the most perfect happiness on earth. We esteem those on earth happy, who are not persecuted, nor poor, nor sick, nor despised; but who are distinguished by their high rank, and are honored by all; who enjoy health, and possess a superfluity of riches and pleasures. And yet, how few ever attain

such temporal happiness, and when they have attained it, how uncertain they are in its possession! But the happiness of the Saints is true, real happiness; for, nothing is wanted to make it most perfect. They are free from everything that could in the least sadden them; they possess all that can make them glad, all that they can desire, nay, much more than they can desire. They are surrounded by joys, they swim in happiness. Therefore it is written: "Enter into the joys of the Lord!" The happiness of the Saints is a secure happiness; for they have nothing to fear. No one can disturb their joy; no one can lessen it; no one can take it away from them. But what increases the bliss of the Saints most is the thought that it shall last eternally. The Saints are in glory, and for evermore. They are filled with joys for evermore, for all eternity. They possess all honor and wealth, and all without end, without interruption. Oh! how great a bliss! But how have the Saints attained it? By the use of those means which God has left in His Church, by true faith; by holy baptism; by observing the Commandments, by avoiding sin, by practising good works, by patience in crosses and sufferings. They walked in the path which Christ shows us in His holy Gospel, the path of innocence, or the path of penance. They served God faithfully and constantly while they were on earth; they earnestly worked for the salvation of their souls; they either committed no sin, or did true penance. When God sent them poverty, sickness, or other adversity, they bore it with Christian patience. In this manner, they attained to such great and eternal felicity. From all this you will doubtless be able to draw the lessons which to-day's festival offers. I will here give them to you in still shorter form. Learn, firstly, how true to His promise God is and how richly He recompenses His servants. He leaves not the least good unrewarded, and the recompense He gives is great and eternal. For short labor and suffering, He gives great and everlasting joys. Who would not willingly serve so liberal a Master? Who would not gladly labor and suffer for Him? Who, that longs so ardently for the possession of mere temporal happiness, can hesitate to aim, with all the powers of his mind, at the eternal bliss prepared for the servants of the Most High? Should not every one be animated by the thought of eternal felicity, faithfully and zealously to serve the Lord? Learn, secondly, that we can gain Heaven in any station of life; for in any station, we can make use of those means which God has given us to work out our salvation. In Heaven there are Saints of all ranks and con-

ditions; emperors and empresses; kings and queens; princes and princesses; nobles and plebeians; learned men and unlettered men; poor and rich; officers and soldiers; magistrates, artisans and peasants; man-servants and maid-servants; unmarried and married persons; widowers and widows; youths, maidens and children. Many Saints lived in the same station in which you live; from it, they went to heaven; and so may you. You have only to live in your station as they did and use the means for your salvation as they used them. Learn, thirdly, that you will have only yourself to blame, if you do not go to heaven to join the Saints; for, God asks no more from you than from them, and gives you the same means for salvation that He gave to them. The Saints were like you, human beings; like you, they lived in dangers and temptations; like you, they suffered and struggled; and yet they served God and went to heaven. Are you unable to do what they did? You are certainly able, if you have but a true and earnest desire to succeed. If you have it not, the fault is entirely your own. The example of so many Saints, who lived in your station, will convict you of falsehood, if you say that your station prevents you from gaining life everlasting.

All that now remains is to consider what must be done to celebrate to-day's festival worthily. A few words will teach you this. If you desire to attain the end and aim of this feast, endeavor according to the instructions of holy Church to honor the Saints of the Almighty and invoke them as powerful intercessors at His throne. They are true servants and friends of God, and they are honored by Him. Their intercession is all-powerful with the Almighty. While still on earth, they obtained for others great gifts from God; why then should they not be able to do so now that they are in heaven? To say that the Saints know nothing of us or of our prayers, is a sign of ignorance, and is against Holy Writ; for, we are assured therein that the Saints are equal to the Angels, and we can not doubt that these have knowledge of us and of our prayers. The Gospel tells us that they rejoice when a sinner does penance; and St. John says that they offer our prayers to God. Hence, call on the Saints with confidence, that, through the merits of Christ, they would obtain for you the grace to live so that you may one day join them. But above all, endeavor to imitate the virtues of the Saints, as this is the best way to honor them. Each Saint calls from Heaven to us, in the words that St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "Be my followers," imitate my example. This is especially the call of those Saints, who lived in your station. If you would enjoy their society

in heaven, you must live as they lived on earth. To live as those lived who are in hell, and yet to hope to go, after this life, where they are whom we venerate as Saints, is senseless. Live as the Saints lived, and you will go to heaven as they did. Walk in their footsteps. No one ever obtained life everlasting without the true faith. No one was saved by faith alone. The Saints labored and suffered for heaven. You too must labor and suffer ; heaven is worth it.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Besides those points already mentioned and explained, learn what thanks you owe to the Almighty, that in His mercy He has placed you in that Church which counts so many Saints. Those who are not Catholics cannot name a single Saint who lived, died and became a Saint in their church ; whilst, in our Catholic Church we have a very great number of Saints. Only in the Catholic Church can you become or be called a Saint and blessed. Being one of her children, you possess the same means which the Saints had and by which they gained their glorious title. That you live in the pale of this Church you owe to God, by whose grace you were admitted into it ; and you can never be sufficiently grateful. How many thousands are deprived of this happiness ! The pious Noah was certainly favored beyond countless others, when he was admitted with all his family into the Ark, in which alone he could escape the flood. God has given you a still greater grace, by admitting you, before countless others, into His true Church, which the Holy Fathers compare to the Ark of Noah, because in it alone can we escape damnation and go to everlasting life. Hence, give humble thanks to the Almighty for this inestimable grace bestowed upon you, and beseech Him to admit into this Ark,

for His greater glory, all those who are still outside its sheltering and saving bosom.

II. By the especial grace of God you are a member of that Church in which so many Saints lived ; but you are not therefore blessed, or assured of your salvation. Many lived in this Church who are now in hell. If you wish to be saved in it, you must live as they did who worked out their salvation in its pale. Not one of them entered heaven except by innocence or penance. If you have preserved your innocence, thank God and guard it carefully. But if your innocence is lost, do penance. The Saints gained eternal life by avoiding sin, by practising good works, and by patiently bearing their cross. If you wish to partake of their glory in heaven, you must follow them on earth. Avoid all sin ; be diligent in doing good, and patient in bearing whatever you have to suffer. No one is now in heaven who died in mortal sin. If you desire to gain heaven, be careful that you die not in mortal sin ; and to guard yourself against dying in it, take care not to become guilty of it. And if, either through malice or through weakness, you should fall into mortal sin, delay not to do penance.

These few words contain all that you have to do, if you desire to save your soul in the Catholic Church as

so many thousands have done before you. Follow them. "Secure the intercession of the Saints by imitating their virtues," says St. Leo; "for if you join them in virtue, you will one day join them in glory."

In conclusion, my dear Reader, remember that to-day's festival is especially disliked by the non-Catholics. The principal reason, as far as we can see, is, that from their youth, they imbibe false ideas of our faith. They are told that Catholics worship the Saints as Gods; and thus rob God of the honor due to Him alone; they leave Him and turn to the dead Saints; they invoke them, and neglect Christ, the only Mediator, as if they were to be saved through the merits of the Saints. These and other similar falsehoods are instilled into them, in early youth, by their teachers and preachers, and afterwards placed before them as truth in books. All non-Catholics ought, however, to know that the above mentioned and other similar charges are unjustifiable and palpable lies. The substance of what our faith teaches in regard to honoring the Saints I have already given elsewhere. It is briefly this: We do not worship the Saints as Gods, but honor them as the friends

and servants of God, who Himself honors them. We venerate them for the sake of God, and all the honor we show them is done to God. He, the Creator, is honored in His Saints; hence, we do not rob the Lord of honor due to Him. We do not forsake God, but we seek to gain admittance to Him through His Saints. Neither do we invoke dead Saints; for, the Saints live with Christ in eternal glory. We do not set aside Christ, our Mediator; for we know well that He died for us and redeemed us. We do not desire to be saved through the merits of the Saints, but through the merits of Christ, as the prayers of our Church clearly prove. We only invoke the Saints in order that they may pray for us and obtain for us, through the merits of Christ, what we ask. Our Catechism, our books and sermons give evidence that this is what the Catholic Church teaches and has always taught. Woe to those who, against their knowledge and conscience, inform the credulous that this is not so! Woe also to those who, through their own fault, believe such palpable falsehoods!

NOTICE.—To-day is the first day of the month. Do not forget to consider what I advised you elsewhere.

SECOND DAY OF NOVEMBER.

THE FEAST OF ALL SOULS.

Yesterday the Catholic Church placed all the Saints of heaven before our eyes, to induce us to give due honor to them, to invoke them, and to follow them in the path of virtue. To-day, she represents those souls to us, which, though destined to rejoice eternally in heaven, at present still suffer in purgatory; and she enjoins us to assist them to the best of our ability. To understand this rightly, it is necessary to know what the true faith

teaches in regard to it. It teaches, firstly, that there is a place which we call purgatory; secondly, that the souls who are there can receive help and comfort from us who are still on earth. In regard to the first of these points, it is known that unhappily a great many people leave this world in disgrace with God, guilty of mortal sins. These go forthwith to hell, without any hope of redemption; and for them we can do nothing. Some, but few, die in the grace of the Almighty, entirely purified from all sin, as they either have not become guilty of sin or have done perfect penance, and fully discharged the debt of temporal punishment which they had deserved. These go immediately to heaven. Lastly, there are others and their number is large, who, although they die in the grace of God, have not expiated all their misdeeds in this world. To these heaven is sure; but they do not enter it immediately; they have to suffer in a third place until they have perfectly atoned for all their sins. This is an article of faith, by which we truly believe that to be absolved from sin as far as the *guilt* is concerned, does not release us always from all the *punishment* due to sin. The *eternal* punishment which we deserve by a mortal sin, will be remitted by a good confession, or, if we cannot confess, by perfect contrition; but the *temporal* punishment still remains, as the Catechism teaches us and as Holy Writ clearly shows. Venial sin is also forgiven by confession or contrition, in so far as the guilt is concerned; but its temporal punishment is not always entirely remitted at the same time. If, therefore, one has not endeavored, during his life, to gain remission of his temporal punishment by voluntary penance, good works, indulgences, patience under crosses and sufferings, he cannot enter heaven immediately after his death, as "nothing defiled can enter there;" but he goes to a place where he will suffer until he is wholly cleansed. This place is called Purgatory.

Concerning the second point, the true faith teaches us that the faithful, who are still living in the world, can help and comfort the souls in purgatory, by assisting at Holy Mass, by prayers, by alms, fasting, indulgences and other good works. This doctrine is founded on the communion of saints, of which the ninth article of the Apostolic Creed speaks. To this communion belong the Saints in heaven, the faithful on earth, and the suffering souls in purgatory. The first are the triumphant, the second, the militant, and the third, the suffering Church. The communion among these three portions of the Church consists in this, that the Saints in heaven pray for us, while we honor and invoke them. For those who are in purgatory, we offer up our prayers and good works; and they pray for us now whilst they

suffer, and will pray for us also after they shall have been admitted into the presence of the Most High. Thus has the Catholic Church, which, on account of the continued assistance of the Holy Ghost, cannot fail, always believed and taught. Hence it has always been the custom of the faithful to pray for the dead. The holy Fathers, Chrysostom and Augustine, testify that the custom of praying for the dead in Holy Mass dates from the time of the Apostles. "It was not instituted by the Apostles without a purpose," writes the former, "that we should remember the dead when we offer the unbloody sacrifice; they knew what benefit the dead would derive from it." "We cannot doubt," says the latter, "that the souls of the dead receive help from the prayers of the holy Church, the sacrifice of the Holy Mass, and from alms given with the intention that they may derive the benefit attached to that good action. For this has been left to us by the Fathers (the Apostles), and the whole Church observes it, that we pray for those who have died in the communion of the body and blood of Christ, when commemoration of them is made during the holy sacrifice, or when it is offered up for them." It is also known, from the books of the Maccabees that, in ancient times, prayers and sacrifices were offered for the dead. Although there is a daily memento for the suffering souls in purgatory during Holy Mass, and though almost all Catholics pray much and daily for them, the Church has instituted that this day should be particularly devoted to their remembrance, and that the faithful should offer their prayers and good works for them with especial fervor to the Almighty. It may be that there are many souls for whom no one prays during the year, because they either left no relatives or friends, or because they are forgotten by them. Hence, on this day, the Church desires that prayer and sacrifice, alms-deeds and other good works be offered for them all. To act in accordance with this holy desire of the Church is but just.

Holy Writ urges us to pray for the dead by the following well-known words: "It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins." (II Maccab. xii.) To have compassion on the poor souls, and to help them according to our means, is holy and wholesome. It is holy, because it springs from the love of God and of our neighbor; for, whoever loves God, loves also those who are loved by God and who love Him; and it is quite certain that the souls in purgatory love God and are loved by Him, although they are punished for a time. It is love of our neighbor, as those suffering in purgatory are perhaps persons nearly related to us, or from whom we have received many benefits, and whom we are therefore obliged to assist. But even if there are none of these, they are still the

souls of our fellow-men ; and this alone should incline and urge us to help them. Love towards our neighbor requires that we do to him as we wish that he would do to us. If you were in the place where these souls are, and if you had to suffer as they, would you not wish to be helped? Therefore try to help them now, if you really love your neighbor. Do not imagine that their suffering is but little, and that it is of little consequence whether they are sooner or later released from it. St. Augustine says : "The fire that cleanses is sharper and more painful than all the suffering which we can conceive in this world." "In my opinion," says St. Gregory, "the fire of purgatory, although it eventually ceases, is more tormenting than all the torments of this world." Other holy Fathers say the same, and add that the difference between the pains of hell and those of purgatory is, that the former are endless, while the latter last but for a time. How long each soul remains in purgatory is unknown to man ; the duration differs, as also the greatness of their tortures. Their suffering is according to their sins. Their greatest pain is that of privation, or the pain of loss ; for as they have an intense longing to behold the Almighty, nothing can exceed the pangs of their grief, at being deprived of His sight until they have entirely expiated their sins. It is most certain that they endure this and other torments with perfect resignation to the will of the Most High ; yes, though they suffer extremely, nevertheless they praise His justice. They are unable to help themselves or to shorten their pains, because their day of labor and merit is past. Hence, what is more just than that we should assist them, that they may be sooner released from their torments? We can do it, and do it so easily ; and the love which we should bear to our neighbor requires it. It is a holy work, it is even more than holy, it is also a useful and wholesome work. The assistance we give to the souls in purgatory, not only helps them to be sooner released from their pains and to see God, but it is also beneficial to ourselves. We lose nothing by offering up our prayers and other good works for them, but we gain much ; for, the Almighty will not permit our charity to them to go without a reward. He is merciful to them that show mercy. And do you suppose that the souls, which, by our prayers, have come so much sooner into the presence of God, will forget us, and not show themselves grateful ? Be assured that we shall have constant intercessors in them before the throne of the Most High. Holy Writ assures us, that "alms delivereth from death, and maketh to find mercy and life everlasting." (Tob. xii.) The kindness you show to the souls in purgatory is an alms you give to them, an act of charity ; and it will result in God's being merci-

ful to you and granting you the grace of doing penance, that you may obtain pardon for your sins and life everlasting. And if, one day, you too are restrained from the presence of God, in those penal fires, doubt not that they whom you will have freed from them will pray most efficaciously for you, that you may soon be admitted into heaven. Reflect then on these benefits which you may draw from being merciful to the poor souls in purgatory, and make to-day the resolution to aid them with all your strength as long as you live. Should you neglect it, you will have to fear that the words of Christ will be exemplified in you: "For with the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again." (Luke, vi.) "Pray for the dead," says St. Augustine, "that they may also pray for you, when they shall have attained eternal glory. They wait to receive help from us. They call on us daily in their torments. If you desire, O man," continues this holy teacher, "that the Almighty should have mercy on you, have mercy on your fellow-being who suffers in purgatory; for God will show you the same kindness that you show to your neighbor. Hence, pray for the dead." And again he says: "One of the most holy practices is to offer sacrifice for the dead, to pray for them and give alms." In like manner do other holy Fathers speak. Richard of St. Victor confirms what has been said and encourages us to observe it, when he says: "The ransomed souls pray without ceasing in heaven for those by whose help they have been released; and the Lord refuses them nothing."

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The fire of purgatory is intended not only for those who, after having committed mortal sin, have been freed from it in so far as its guilt is considered, but also for those who die in venial sin. These too shall be for a time punished by not seeing the Almighty, and besides this, by other terrible torments; for, nothing defiled can enter heaven. Hence you can conclude how great the wickedness of a venial sin must be, since the just God punishes it so severely, and that in souls which He loves most dearly; for, all those who suffer in purgatory are God's friends, and will reign for

ever with Christ in heaven. Yet the Almighty does not admit them into His presence, until they are entirely cleansed by severe suffering. How blind and foolish, therefore, are those who regard a venial sin as only a trifle, or do not esteem it worthy of any thought at all. God, who is just, would not punish venial sin so severely were its wickedness not great in His sight. "We read in the laws," says St. Salvianus, "that those who had transgressed the least commandment of the Lord were most severely punished; so that we might understand that nothing is trifling which touch-

es the Majesty of God. For, what seems small, in regard to the evil done by it, is yet great, because it offends the Lord." Therefore, think not lightly of venial sin, but endeavor to avoid it with the utmost care. We should rather die and suffer all possible torments, than commit a sin, not only a mortal, but even a venial sin.

II. Be more solicitous to atone here on earth for the sins of which you have been guilty, that you may not have to suffer too long in purgatory. I know there are men who fear not purgatory, and who therefore are little concerned about expiating their sins. They say: "If I only escape hell, I will be satisfied." Others depend upon the prayers of relatives and friends, or upon the Masses for which they have made or intend to make provision in their will, or upon the prayers of the members of the Confraternity to which they belong, to be speedily released from purgatory. The former may read what I have cited above from the works of St.

Augustine and St. Gregory, and draw from it, that this thought in regard to purgatory, and the negligence in atoning for offences, which results from it, are so dangerous and so displeasing to the Almighty, that they may easily be misled by it into mortal sin and go to eternal destruction. The latter may take to heart the words of the pious Thomas à Kempis, who writes: "Do not place too great confidence in friends and acquaintances, and do not defer your salvation to the future; for men will forget you much sooner than you imagine. It is better to make provision in time, and to send some good in advance of you, than to hope for the assistance of others after your death. If you do not take care of yourself now, who will care for you when you are gone?" St. Gregory desires to impress the same upon us when he says: "Man acts more securely, if he himself does, during his life, what he wishes others to do for him after his death."

THIRD DAY OF NOVEMBER.

ST. MALACHY, BISHOP.

St. Malachy, whose life was written by the great St. Bernard, was born of noble and rich parents, in Ireland. From his youth he loved silence, solitude and prayer. His mind was far beyond his years, and he surpassed all his fellow-students in learning and wisdom. Not less did he excel them in virtue and piety. While yet a youth, he went to a very devout hermit and learned from him the way to serve God and secure the salvation of his soul. Celsus, the Archbishop of Armagh, soon after ordained him priest, and charged him to preach, to visit the sick, and to instruct the ignorant. All this was done by the holy priest, with great zeal and to the great benefit of souls. His sister frequent-

ly found fault with him when she saw how unweariedly he visited the poor, assisted the sick and buried them after their death. But after her death, she appeared to him and told him that she had much to suffer for it in purgatory, and implored him to intercede for her. The holy priest said Mass for her and thus released her from her pains. Some time later, he rebuilt the Abbey of Benchor, and made his residence there, in company with several religious whom he had himself instructed. The life these monks led was an example to the whole country, and their labors in preaching and other religious duties conduced to the salvation of numberless souls.

Meanwhile, the See of Connor became vacant, and as the people desired Malachy to be their bishop, Celsus commanded him to accept the dignity. The zeal and solicitude of the holy man in his new office, and the labors and sufferings he underwent in the discharge of his duties cannot be related in few words. He travelled from town to town, from village to village, visited his flock, instructed them, and then returned to his Abbey. After some years, the city of Connor was taken and destroyed in war, and Malachy was forced to take refuge with Cormac, King of Munster, who received him and his religious brethren most kindly and assisted him to build a new abbey. The Saint had spent but a few years in this new home, when Celsus, the Primate of Ireland, died, after having,—on his death-bed, expressed the wish that Malachy should be his successor. The Clergy and all the people elected the Saint with great joy ; but it was not until after a long time and great trouble that he could freely exercise his functions, on account of the opposition made by some of the nobility, who desired to make the see of Armagh hereditary in their own family. Two of them successively took forcible possession of it. At last, however, the holy man was established in the See, but he had much to suffer from those of the nobles and great men of the country, who had opposed his promotion, and who now calumniated him and endeavored to make him hateful to the people. One day, there were some hired assassins lying in wait for him in a wood through which he had to pass. Suddenly, however, a fearful thunderstorm arose and four of them were killed by the lightning. A man, who had most shamefully insulted the Saint at a public meeting, was immediately afflicted by a horrible swelling in his mouth, which soon swarmed with worms. His tongue corrupted and fell from his mouth and he died most miserably. A woman had the insolence to apply to the holy man, among other epithets, that of hypocrite, and to call him a thief who had stolen the crosier. The bishop replied not a word, but the wicked woman was cast to the ground by

an invisible power, and violently tossed hither and thither, until she expired, crying out: "Malachy strangles me; Malachy strangles me!" Thus did the Almighty punish the enemies and calumniators of His faithful servant.

At another time, he was most miraculously protected. The most powerful of the nobles opposed to the Saint had conspired with several others to kill him. Under the pretext of a conference to agree upon the terms of a reconciliation, the bishop was invited to the nobleman's house. The friends of Malachy strongly urged him to decline the invitation, as they had every reason to suspect an evil design. The holy man replied: "My brethren, allow me to follow my Master. How can I call myself a Christian, if I do not imitate Christ. Perhaps I may soften the heart of my enemy by my humility." He then went to the appointed place, where he was met by a number of armed men, who, however, became so frightened when he appeared, that none of them had the heart to move. The leader of the conspiracy repented and asked the Saint's pardon, and ever after treated him with due reverence. This and other marks of the divine protection encouraged the bishop so that neither menaces nor persecutions could ever deter him from the performance of his duty. After the lapse of some years, he went to Rome and requested the Pope to release him from his episcopal dignity, as he desired to spend the remainder of his life in the monastery of St. Bernard, with whom he had become acquainted during his travels. But the Pope, instead of consenting to his request, placed his own mitre on the bishop's head, presented him with his own priestly robes, declared him papal Nuncio, and thus sent him back to Ireland. On his return, he redoubled his labors for the salvation of souls, and God favored him with many and great miracles. St. Bernard relates many of them, but adds: "The greatest miracle was the holy man himself, on account of his virtues and truly apostolic life." From the day of his ordination to the priesthood, he practised the strictest poverty. Never was an idle, much less a sinful word heard to pass his lips. He always travelled on foot, and was satisfied with the poorest fare, nor would he ever be served better than his religious brethren. He begged alms for the poor and assisted them most tenderly. No one left him without being comforted. His exhortations to sinners were full of kindness; he represented to them the great mercy of the Almighty, and encouraged them to hope. Not until he was convinced that such motives would make no impression, did he endeavor to awaken in them a wholesome fear, by menacing them with the vengeance of the Lord, and thus induce them to do penance. To more than one, who still refused to reform,

he, with prophetic spirit, denounced the vengeance of heaven, and the event showed that his words were not idle. We have an example of this in a man, whom the Saint had several times most earnestly exhorted to remove an occasion of sin, but who swore that he would never obey. The Saint, indignant at this perversity, said: "May God then tear you, against your will, from your wicked companion!" In the same hour, the wretch was taken away in his sin by being murdered.

Many other details, which St. Bernard relates, we must omit, to add only a few words of our Saint's happy end. During a second journey to Rome, whither he was called by some important affairs, he stopped at Clairvaux to visit St. Bernard. Here he became sick, and having devoutly received the holy Sacraments, he blessed all those around him, and died so calmly, that they who stood by did not perceive that he had passed away. Long before his end, when, one day, some of his religious said where and how they would like to die, he expressed his wish that he might die at Clairvaux, the monastery of St. Bernard, and on the Feast of All Saints, because on that day so many masses and good works were offered for the souls of the departed. God granted the wishes of His faithful servant, by taking him to heaven from Clairvaux, in the night following the Feast of All Saints, in his 54th year, A. D. 1148.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Malachy represents to sinners the mercy of God, to animate them with hope, and also His justice to awaken within them a wholesome fear and thus stimulate them to do penance. Many Christians think only of the divine mercy, and hence become more and more free in sinning and slow to repentance. Their standing phrase is: "God is so immeasurably merciful; He will forgive my sins, and will not condemn me. He receives a sinner even in his last hour, and thus I can continue to live after my own fancy; I have time enough to repent." Others, on the contrary, think only of the divine justice, and become despondent or perhaps even despair. The former hope too much and fear too little; the latter

fear too much and hope too little. Both are wrong. St. Basil says: "Holy Writ most generally unites the mercy and the justice of the Almighty. God is merciful and just (Psalm xxiv.) Hence we ought not to separate these attributes of the Most High in our meditations." By meditating on the mercy of God, we should animate ourselves with hope, and by meditating on His justice, we ought to be filled with wholesome fear. "Love God," says St. Augustine, "because He is full of mercy; fear Him, because He is just." Fear and hope, hope and fear, must be united. How this may be done, St. Cæsarius teaches, in the following words: "A sinner should fear justice while seeking mercy: and hope for mercy while

fearing justice." St. Gregory gives most excellent advice, which you ought to impress deeply on your heart: "Before committing sin, man ought to fear divine justice; but after having sinned, he ought to hope for mercy;" that is, when we are tempted to sin, we should think of the justice of God, that fear may prevent us from becoming guilty; but when we have committed sin, let us think of God's mercy, that the hope of pardon may lead us to repentance. If man, before he sins, considers only God's mercy, he may easily yield to evil, saying to himself: "I will confess it; and God, who is all-merciful, will pardon me." And if, after having become guilty of sin, he thinks only of the justice of God, he may fall into despair. The chaste Susanna thought of the justice of God when she was tempted to sin. "For if I do this thing," said she, "it is death to me, (Daniel, xiii.) meaning, "if I commit this sin, I shall be damned: God will punish me." This inspired her with a wholesome fear, and kept her from evil. Cain, after having become guilty, thought only of the justice of God, and despaired. "My iniquity is greater, than that I may deserve pardon" (Genesis, iv.). Judas, according to the opinion of St. Chrysostom, thought, before his crime, only of his Master's goodness, and hence he became guilty. Afterwards, considering the greatness of his sin, and the justice of the Most High, he despaired. May you be wise, and follow the advice of St. Gregory. Before you become guilty of any wrong, think of the justice of heaven. Hope and fear; but each at the right time.

II. The threat of St. Malachy to the lewd man, who paid no heed to exhortations and admonitions, was fulfilled. Learn from it that the menaces of God's ministers are

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not to be despised, and be careful that you do not learn this by your own experience and perhaps to your eternal grief. Your confessor, the preacher in the pulpit, as well as your own conscience, have frequently admonished you to avoid some occasion of sin; to shun the companionship of a certain person not to enter a certain house where you have often offended God; to correct this or that bad habit; and these admonitions told you, at the same time, to fear lest God would punish you, if you heeded them not, by striking you with a sudden and unhappy death. And you perhaps laugh at such menaces, relate them to others, and scoff at them. Oh, beware! The same God, that fulfilled the menaces of St. Malachy, is still living, and He can do to you also what His ministers say in His name. You despise God when you despise the threats and admonitions of your confessor; and this will not remain unpunished. If punishment has not yet reached you, it will come, sooner or later, either in this world or in the next; for, St. Bernard says with reason: "The longer God waits for our conversion, the more terribly will He punish us if we neglect it." St. Augustine says, on the same subject: "As merciful and long-suffering as the Almighty shows Himself in this life, so terrible will be His judgment in the life to come." One point more I wish you to consider well. You have heard what happened to the persecutors and defamers of St. Malachy, and how terribly God punished them. If the same fate befell all persecutors and calumniators of the clergy, I am convinced that there would not be so many to slander them so wickedly, and to accuse them of so many vices. But we must not imagine, that, because

they do not immediately experience God's wrath, they will escape unpunished; indeed, they may well fear the judgment of the Almighty in the next world. Guard yourself, then, against the grievous crime of slander against the clergy. Even if some of them are not all that they should be, it is a sin for you to make known their faults to those who cannot correct them; and you are unreasonable if, on that account, you despise and calumniate the whole clergy. God has not made

you a judge of their actions; He has kept this to Himself. What are their faults to you? Heed your own; for, of these you will have to render an account. Remember the words of St. Chrysostom: "Priests are the representatives of Christ. Whoever honors them, honors the Lord; and whoever wrongs them, wrongs Him whom they replace upon earth." Can you think that the just God will allow a wrong done to Him to go unpunished?

FOURTH DAY OF NOVEMBER.

ST. CHARLES BORROMEO, ARCHBISHOP AND CARDINAL.

The great and holy Charles Borromeo is justly accounted one of the most celebrated Saints that lived in the sixteenth century, and who, by their virtues and the miracles they performed, made the Catholic Church glorious in the very face of her enemies. Charles was born of very illustrious parents, in 1538, at the castle of Arona, fourteen miles from Milan. A bright light which shone above the castle at the time of Charles' birth, and which, sending its rays afar off, continued for over two hours, was doubtless a sign of the great virtue and holiness with which this new-born child would ornament and illuminate the Church of Christ. Charles, even in childhood, evinced great inclination for the religious state, as he imitated at home everything he saw the priests do at Church. In later years, when he began his studies, he served as a model of virtue to every one. His purity he kept inviolate amidst the greatest dangers; no one ever heard him speak an unchaste word, and if others said anything that in the least offended his ear, he immediately withdrew, and carefully avoided all frivolous, idle or disobedient youths. As soon as he had arrived at the proper age, pope Pius IV. called him to Rome, and bestowed upon him the Cardinal's hat, with the Archbishopric of Milan. When afterwards his brother died without issue, the friends of the family urged Charles to abandon the clerical state in order to perpetuate his lineage; but he remained constant in his resolution to serve the Lord in celibacy.

He had assisted at the Council of Trent; and was the first who endeavored to reform his See in perfect accordance with its decrees. He made the beginning at his own court, which he composed of priests to whom he prescribed certain regulations, by the observance of which, they might become perfect laborers for the vineyard of the Lord. His resolve, on becoming a prelate of the Church, had been: "I will either be no Cardinal and Archbishop, or I will endeavor to gain such virtues as are in accordance with my dignity." And it may be truly said that the Saint possessed, in an eminent degree, all those virtues which a prelate of such high standing ought to possess. He held many councils, and made the most wholesome regulations to exterminate abuses and to restore Christian morals. Of his revenues as bishop nothing went to his relatives, but all to promote the honor of God and to assist the poor. The number of churches he built and restored, as well in his own diocese as elsewhere, is almost incredible. All these he most liberally endowed. Above the door of each church, he placed an image of the Blessed Virgin, not only to admonish all to honor her, but also to teach them to seek through her, admittance to Christ, our Mediator and Redeemer. He erected many religious houses for both sexes, that God Almighty might be praised by their inmates, and His blessing drawn down by their prayers. He also built many hospitals for the sick, and several for houseless strangers, for orphans, and for women who desired to lead a better life. He also instituted schools for children, and seminaries for students of theology, so that his parishes might be filled with pious, learned and zealous priests. Besides this, he instituted a society of priests, whom he named Oblates, to be employed in preaching and other spiritual functions. To secure to his Episcopal city the benefits of a truly Christian education of the highest order, he introduced the priests of the Society of Jesus at Milan, and gave them a college and a magnificent church. Those who knew all the rich foundations he made, deemed it impossible that one Cardinal could collect so much money as he spent, especially as he had resigned all other benefices which he had received from the Pope, desiring to live only upon the income of his Archbishopric. Still more wonderful and miraculous was the fact, that, besides supporting the above-mentioned foundations, he had yet so much left him to comfort the poor. His palace was always open to all the poor and to strangers, especially to religious; and all received not only food, but also alms, devout books, rosaries, etc. He had two servants whose only duty was to distribute alms. One of them had the care of the poor who came to the palace; the other carried the alms to the

houses of the indigent. After the death of his brother, Saint Charles had been declared, by Philip II., of Spain, heir to the principality of Oria, the annual income of which was nearly 10,000 ducats. Of this he used not one farthing for himself or his relatives, but gave one part of it to the poor, the other to churches and hospitals. From the great care he took of the temporal welfare of the poor, we can easily conclude how great must have been his solicitude for the souls of those under him. He was a perfect model of a watchful shepherd. Inexpressibly great were the pains he took to drive away from his flock the heretics who, at that period, wandered about like ravenous wolves; and to keep his own in the fold of Christ, the true Church. He preached in several churches, not only on Sundays and Feast-days, but also during the week. He admonished and instructed the people in their own houses, visited the sick and comforted the dying. He strove to uproot the bad customs which prevailed at the carnival. He visited his entire diocese, accompanied by several priests. There was not a town or village to which he did not go. Everywhere he renewed the churches, preached, gave instructions, administered the holy Sacraments, and exhorted all to lead a Christian life. None could understand how the holy Cardinal, whose health was delicate, could bear so much fatigue in travelling, without permitting heat or cold, snow or rain to prevent him. His apostolic zeal and untiring care for his beloved flock made all labor and hardship easy to him. The most splendid proof of this solicitude he gave in 1575, when the pestilence ravaged Milan for several months. To save his life from the terrible disease, he was begged to leave the city; but he could not be persuaded. "A good shepherd," said he, "gives his life for his sheep." Hence he remained, and he assigned priests for every street, that no one might die without the holy Sacraments. He himself went into the houses of those stricken down, especially into those of the poor, heard their confession, administered the holy Sacraments to them and attended to their bodily comfort. The number of poor, who came to him from other places for aid, was so great, that for want of money, he divided among them the provisions which had been stored away for his own use. He also sold his plate and the furniture of his house, and gave the money to the needy. The hangings of the walls, the curtains of the windows, and even his own clothes were not spared: everything was given away to assist the poor. His own bed was carried into the hospital, and he took his short rest on some hard boards. These were surely proofs of his great love for his neighbor. Further, the holy Cardinal ordered several penitential processions

to avert the anger of God. He himself appeared in them, barefoot, with a rope around his neck and a heavy cross on his shoulders. He offered to the Almighty his own life, ready and willing to die for his sheep. After the pestilence had disappeared, he gave due thanks to the Almighty, and enjoined upon all to do the same. When some one justly praised his zeal, he said: "I have only fulfilled the duties of a true shepherd towards his sheep." We should fill many pages were we to attempt to describe the devotion and virtues of this holy man. He possessed in an eminent degree the spirit of prayer, and employed several hours of the day and of the night in contemplation. At the time of the "Forty hours' devotion," he more than once remained in church from early morning until evening. He fasted almost daily, and in the last years of his life, on water and bread. During the 40 days' fast, he even abstained from bread, and ate only a few figs. He always wore a rough hair-shirt, and scourged himself mercilessly. He never warmed himself at the fire during the winter, and allowed himself very little time to sleep, constantly mortifying his body. But above all, how admirable were his heroic patience and fortitude under vicissitudes, his winning gentleness, his deep humility, and his perfection in other virtues! He, however, closed early a life so fruitful in good and great deeds.

Although the Cardinal was still in his best years, he resigned himself to the will of the Almighty, when an inner voice told him that his death was near. He made a pilgrimage to Mount Varallo, where he spent 15 days in the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius, under the direction of a priest of the Society of Jesus, whom he had chosen as his confessor. He cleansed his soul, which had never been stained by a mortal sin, by a general confession. Feeling that he was attacked by the disease which he knew would release him from earth, he returned to Milan where he arrived on the second day of November. On the third, he received the holy Sacraments with great devotion, and desiring to die like a penitent, he had himself laid upon haircloth strewed with ashes. Continually praying, he remained in this penitential position until the third hour after sundown, when, raising his eyes to the image of the Saviour, he gave his soul to his Maker, in the 47th year of his life. It would require a whole volume to relate all the miracles which the Almighty wrought to honor this untiring servant, as well during his life as after his death. The splendid example of his virtues is sufficient to merit our highest esteem. I will only add that the holy Cardinal, after his death, appeared to one of his friends, radiant with heavenly glory, and said: "I am happy."

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. "I am happy," said St. Charles after his death. How can it be otherwise with one who kept his innocence unimpaired among so many dangers ; who evinced such constant zeal in prayer, fasting and almsgiving ; who labored so faithfully for the honor of God and the salvation of souls ; who was so severe towards himself, and so kind to the poor, the sick, and the forsaken ? It is the promise of God that the just shall be happy. "Say to the just man that it is well" (Isai. iii.). Will it, however, be well with you after your death ? This depends, by the grace of God, on yourself alone. Follow St. Charles in avoiding sin, in practicing good works, in mortifying your body, in kindness towards the poor, and, as much as is in your power, in zeal to work for the honor of God and the salvation of souls : and I assure you that you will be happy after your death. But should you persist in the contrary, if you voluntarily commit sin, if you are indolent in the practice of good works, if you live only for your own pleasure and comfort, and are not charitable to the poor ; I can only, according to the Gospel, foretell that you will not be able to say with St. Charles : "I am happy : " but you will cry with the rich man : "I am tormented in this flame" (Luke, xvi.).

II. St. Charles employed all his income for the honor of God and the comfort of the poor. The building and renewing of many churches, the founding of many convents and hospitals, the rich alms given to the poor, are proofs of it. Even to-day this speaks much more in favor of the holy Cardinal, than if he had

given his possessions to his relatives and friends, or had employed them to build magnificent palaces, or to maintain useless animals, to purchase luxurious garments, to indulge in splendid banquets and vain amusements, as too many of his rank have done both before and after him, whose very names are forgotten. But this is the least portion of his merit. Think of the praise and honor which the holy Cardinal received from God ; the joy and glory that became his in heaven. What would it benefit him at this moment, if he had dissipated his wealth, as many others have done ? He would not have gained the love either of God or of men ; nor would he have been received into the glories of heaven ; but on the contrary, he might have earned eternal shame and damnation. And what benefit will those one day have, who use their temporal possessions quite differently from St. Charles ? What comfort, what advantage will it bring to them ? Certainly, neither advantage nor comfort, but great responsibility, heavy punishment, because they have not used what God had given them, for the end and aim for which they received it. The conclusion from this you may draw yourself. "Not only the spiritual possessions come from God, but also the temporal," says St. Leo ; "hence, God will justly require us to account for them ; as He gives them to us not so much to possess, as to distribute them. We must consequently endeavor to make a right use of the gifts of the Almighty, so that the occasion of good works may not become the occasion for doing evil."

FIFTH DAY OF NOVEMBER.

ST. HUBERT, BISHOP OF MAESTRICHT AND LIEGE.

St. Hubert, bishop of Maestricht and Liege, was the son of Bertrand, duke of Aquitain. In his childhood, he was led in the path of piety; but coming afterwards to the Court of King Theodoric, and thence to that of Duke Pepin of Heristal, he lost all love for devotion, and was carried away by the pleasures of the world. Yielding to Pepin's wish, he married Floribana, a very virtuous duchess, but did not in the least change his conduct. His occupations were gaming and feasting. He was also passionately fond of hunting, and wasted much of his precious time in roving through fields and forests. St. Oda, a sister of his mother, who had very carefully guided his early youth, was very sad on account of his having given himself entirely to worldly pursuits, and prayed daily to God for his conversion. Her prayer was at length granted. One day, when Hubert was in full pursuit of a noble stag, the animal, suddenly turning round, stood still. Hubert gazed at it in astonishment, and saw a crucifix between its antlers, while from its lips he heard distinctly: "Hubert! Hubert, how long wilt thou pursue wild animals, and waste the time given thee to work out thy salvation? I warn thee that, if thou wilt not lead a better life, thou shalt be cast into hell." Hubert, who, on seeing the image of his crucified Lord, had immediately dismounted and thrown himself upon the ground, listened trembling, and was deeply moved at these words. A second Saul, he cried: "Lord, what wilt thou have me do?" "Go to Maestricht," was the reply; "Bishop Lambert will tell thee what thou must do."

Hubert, somewhat consoled by these words, although still full of fear at the terrible menace, repented of his past conduct, and immediately went to St. Lambert. Sinking down on his knees before the bishop, Hubert wept so bitterly that he could not utter a word. Lambert asked him the cause of his grief, and why he had come. Hubert related all that had happened, and humbly begged the holy bishop to show him the path he ought to follow in order not to be cast into hell. The bishop, having encouraged him to trust in the mercy of God, advised

him to make a thorough confession, and then instructed him in regard to his future conduct. After this, Hubert returned home, and, without informing any one of what had happened to him, he showed by his life that he was quite a different man. His only desire now was to leave the world entirely, and to serve God more perfectly. The early death of his wife gave him the desired opportunity for doing so ; for, God called her to Himself after she had given birth to a son.

Hubert, recognizing the hand of the Almighty in this event, gave thanks to Him, and going to his holy teacher, told him that he was determined to lead the life of a hermit, in order the better to atone for his sins and to serve God in peace. St. Lambert praised his resolution, instructed him how to regulate his life in the desert, gave him his blessing and dismissed him quite consoled. On his return home, Hubert was informed that his father had become very sick, and hastening to him, he remained with him until his end. By this death, Hubert became heir to the whole duchy ; but he resigned it to his younger brother, gave his own possessions to the poor, reserving only as much as was needed for his son, whom he gave in charge of his brother, to be educated according to his station in life. In this manner, Hubert freed himself from every earthly tie, and, going into the forest where he had had the above-mentioned apparition, he led during seven years a most austere and holy life.

After this time, he felt an inner desire to make a pilgrimage to Rome, and having the permission of St. Lambert, he went thither as a poor pilgrim, and visited with great devotion the churches and the tombs of the Saints. During his stay there, St. Lambert was cruelly murdered in his church, for having fearlessly reprovèd the King of France for his unchaste life. An angel appeared on the following night to Pope Sergius, and informing him of the death of St. Lambert, commanded him at the same time to appoint Hubert, the disciple of Lambert, whom he would see enter the Church of the Apostles on the following day, as his successor. When the Pope awoke, he went into the church, and when he saw Hubert enter in the garb of a pilgrim, he called him and asked him who he was and whence he came. Hubert gave his name, adding that he was a disciple of bishop Lambert, and that the purpose of his pilgrimage was to visit the holy places. The Pope desired to hear no more, but taking Hubert by the hand, led him to the shrine of St. Peter and said to him : " Your teacher, St. Lambert has been killed by wicked people, but is already crowned in heaven ; and you shall become his successor." The humble servant of God endeavored to excuse himself, but the Pope informed him of the

divine command, which Hubert could not disobey. He was therefore consecrated by the Pope himself, and returned as bishop to Maestricht. Before he had reached the city, his appointment and consecration had been made known, so that he was joyfully received by the people and the clergy, and placed upon the episcopal throne. The first resolution of the new bishop was to conform his life to the example of his holy teacher, St. Lambert, who was already honored as a martyr. Hubert transferred his see to Liege, where St. Lambert had been buried; and not satisfied with guarding and leading by word and example the flock entrusted to his care, he also endeavored to uproot entirely the idolatry which still existed in the neighboring places; and his undertaking was blessed with great success.

After having converted many thousand souls to Christ, and administered his functions as a true and holy pastor for nearly 30 years, he was called to receive the eternal reward of his faithful services. A year before he died, his last hour was made known to him by divine revelation, while, at the same time, the glory which was prepared for him in heaven was shown him in an ecstasy. In his last sickness, after he had received the holy Sacraments, he saw a great number of spirits of hell, who menacing him most fearfully, tried to approach him. Asking for holy water, he sprinkled himself and his bed with it and thus drove away the hosts of hell. After this, he raised his eyes on high, and having recited the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer, he expired. The power of the intercession of the Saint is still seen at this day, especially in favor of those who are bitten by rabid animals.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. "How long will you pursue wild beasts and waste the precious time given you to work out your salvation?" This was asked of Hubert by Christ, the Lord. The same question I address to you. How long will you waste the time of your life? Behold, the present days of your life are the days of your salvation; that is, they are days which God has given you to work out your salvation. You have, until now, wasted so many days, because you did not employ them to the end for which they were given.

How long will you continue thus? Has not the Almighty waited long enough for your conversion? Have you not reason to fear that He will say to you what He said to Hubert: "I warn thee that if thou dost not soon change thy conduct, thou shalt go to hell." Heed it well: "Soon!" God may suffer from you a certain number of iniquities; He destines for you a certain number of graces, a certain number of days. How large this number is, you do not know. For some men it is large, for others small. If you fill the

measure of sin without being converted, you will die and go to destruction in your sins. When the number of your graces or of your days is full, you will not receive others from God, and your time will have expired in which to work out your salvation. God will then let you die and will banish you eternally from His face. If it is, therefore, your earnest desire to escape hell, follow St. Hubert, and reform your life. To-day the Almighty gives you yet time and grace; whether He will give you the same also to-morrow, I do not know. "We must, therefore," says St. Ambrose, "work, with the grace of the Almighty, without delay." "And we helping, exhort you that you receive not the grace of God in vain," writes St. Paul. "For he saith: in an accepted time have I heard thee, and in the day of salvation have I helped thee. Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation!" (II Cor. vi.) But who receives the grace of God in vain? St. Anselm says: "Those who do not coöperate with it, or who, by their indolence, cause the grace received to be idle and of no effect." Take care that you do not belong to these. Work to-day with the grace; because to-day is the day of salvation, a day on which you can work at your salvation.

II. Hunting, gaming and such amusements were the pastime and occupation of Hubert: God threatened him with hell if he did not change his conduct. Why this? Is gaming or hunting a mortal sin? No, in itself, it is not. But as Hubert passed most of his time in these diversions, as he was passion-

ately devoted to them, and did not earnestly occupy himself with his salvation, he sinned, and would have gone to eternal destruction, had he not changed his conduct. Heed this most important truth. There are many wordly pleasures and pastimes, which in themselves are no sin; but if we devote ourselves passionately to them, waste much time on them and hence neglect the duties of our station, and do not endeavor earnestly to gain Heaven, then we sin, and may cause our eternal ruin; because we have not used our time well and have not given it to that object for which God bestowed it upon us. My fear that many thus go to perdition, is great beyond words! They flatter themselves with the empty pretext: "I do nothing wrong; playing at this or that game is not doing evil; hunting or dancing is not a sin." But is it not sinful enough to employ the noble time, given us by God to work out our salvation, almost entirely in idle amusements? Is it not evil enough to do no good? A servant who does no other evil, except not to employ his time according to the will of his master, does evil enough, and must not expect to be rewarded, but to be beaten with many stripes. "And that servant who knew the will of his Lord, and prepared not himself, and did not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." (Luke, xii.) "And the unprofitable servant cast ye out into the exterior darkness!" (Matt. xxv.)

Examine yourself; and if you are such an unprofitable servant,—reform!

SIXTH DAY OF NOVEMBER.

ST. LEONARD, CONFESSOR.

The Roman Martyrology says of this Saint as follows: "At Limoges, in Aquitain, shone St. Leonard, a disciple of St. Remigius, who, of noble parentage, chose a solitary life and became renowned for his holiness and the miracles he wrought. His power, however, was especially manifested in liberating prisoners."

Leonard, a native of France, was of very high lineage. Clovis, the first Christian king of that country, with whom his parents stood in high favor, was his sponsor. St. Remigius, Bishop of Rheims, baptized him, and instructed him for several years. The king, in course of time, offered him a high office at court; but Leonard had already conceived a disgust for all temporal things and had determined to employ his days only in the service of God and for the salvation of souls. Hence, he was ordained priest by St. Remigius, and began to preach the word of God. His holy conduct gave great power to his words to move the hearts of his hearers. There was hardly any one whom he did not succeed in converting or persuade to constancy in pursuing the path of right. He first preached at Orleans; after which he travelled through the whole of Gascony, where a great portion of the inhabitants were yet idolaters. God bestowed on him the gift of miracles. He freed the possessed, made the blind see, the deaf hear, and restored health to the sick.

It happened, one day, that the king was hunting with his queen, in a forest. The latter, who was with child, was suddenly taken sick, and her life and that of her child were in great danger. Leonard, not knowing anything of this, was at the same time traversing the forest, on his way to a neighboring village, where he was going to preach. Led by Providence, he came to the place where the queen lay ill. Having been informed of the sad circumstances, he sank upon his knees and prayed, and when he arose, the queen was happily delivered. The King expressed his warmest thanks to the servant of the Lord, and offered him some valuable presents, which the Saint refused, telling the king to give the value of them to the poor. The king promised to follow the charitable request, but insisted that

Leonard should accept as a gift the forest in which the miracle had happened, and use it as he deemed best. The Saint, however, was satisfied with a portion of it, large enough to build a chapel in honor of the Blessed Virgin, and a hut for himself and his companions. The king had both buildings erected; and Leonard, entering joyfully into his new dwelling, led a strict and holy life. The fame of his holiness caused many to come to him who desired to serve the Almighty under his guidance. He received them kindly, and instructed them in virtue and piety. Some of these were grieved that there was no water in the neighborhood, and that they had to bring it from a distance. Leonard offered a prayer to the Almighty, and immediately there gushed forth, near the chapel, a spring of the purest water, which exists to this day. This and other miracles spread the fame of the Saint to distant countries, so that his assistance was often requested by people who lived afar off. God bestowed upon him peculiar power to help the unfortunate, as several prisoners especially experienced. It is attested that many who were languishing in dungeons were miraculously restored to liberty when they had heard of the great holiness of St. Leonard and had begged of God to be merciful to them for his sake. The same happened to others who regarded Leonard, though still living and far away, as if he had been already one of the Saints reigning in heaven, and who requested him with the greatest confidence, to intercede for them. Many of these brought to the Saint the chains and irons, with which they had been fettered, and thanked him for having released them by his prayers. This gave him an opportunity to admonish them to free themselves, by true repentance, from the chains of sin, and to make their lives such that they would not one day be imprisoned in that dungeon from which there is no escape.

Similar admonitions he gave to others who visited him in his solitude. The inhabitants of the neighboring villages and hamlets he sought to lead to piety and the fear of God by his sermons. After having thus lived a holy life for many years, he longed to be relieved from the fetters of life and admitted to the liberty of the children of God. His prayer was accepted; for, God called him to heaven by a happy death, in 549. The miraculous deliverance of prisoners, however, ended not at the death of St. Leonard. A great many chains were brought to the tomb of the Saint, by different persons, who said that, by calling on St. Leonard, they had been most miraculously led out of prison. From many hundred instances we will select only a few.

The Count of Limoges had chained an innocent man in heavy irons and in such a manner that he could not move without pain.

Calling with great confidence on St. Leonard, he was immediately released by the Saint who appeared to him, struck off the chain and told him to take it along. The man obeyed, took the heavy chain upon his shoulder, with the greatest ease, and followed his guide, who led him away into the church where the body of the Saint was buried. There the Saint disappeared, and he, who had been so miraculously delivered, related what had happened. A similar miracle was performed in favor of a prisoner of war, who against all justice, had been cast into a deep pit in the earth, by his captor, who mockingly said, that St. Leonard could open the doors of the prisons and deliver the prisoners, but it had never been heard that he had freed any one out of a pit under the earth. The prisoner was not discouraged, but called the more fervently on the Saint, who appeared to him and led him from his subterranean vault to the gates of the monastery of Nouaille, where the man so happily delivered related the great miracle that the kind Saint had wrought on him. Let this suffice in praise of St. Leonard, or rather, in honor of the Most High, who is wonderful in His Saints.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The prayer offered by St. Leonard for the queen had the desired effect. Why has your prayer so often no effect whatever? Because it is not agreeable to the Most High: because it is not as it ought to be. "Three things," says St. Bernard, "make prayers agreeable to God: attention, devotion and reverence." Perhaps not one of these three requisites is to be found in your prayers. How can they, then, be agreeable to God? how can they have the desired effect? If you wish that, in future, your prayer may be pleasing to the Almighty, endeavor first, to say it with attention; give no occasion to distraction by looking about or talking. Should you feel tempted to do either the one or the other, endeavor to preserve your recollec-

tion by thinking of the presence of the Most High. Secondly, recite your prayer with devotion and fervor, considering yourself a poor beggar who appears before the mightiest and kindest of all Lords, to obtain relief. Thirdly, say it with due reverence. You read that St. Leonard sank upon his knees when he prayed. Oh! how many of our prayers are rendered worse than useless by our standing up boldly and without reverence, or by lazily sitting down, leaning against the wall, by talking, laughing, looking about. Such prayer is not agreeable to the Lord, and it not only fails of the desired effect, but rather tends to increase our sins and hence our punishment: because it is a horror in the eyes of God and an offence to His Majesty. Take

care that your prayer be not such.

II. Take to heart the admonition that St. Leonard gave to them who brought their chains to him : that they should free themselves from the bonds of sin by true penance, so that they might not be banished into that prison whence there is no escape. I ask you, if you were bound and chained in your house by your enemy, and had to fear that you would soon be imprisoned for all your life in a fearful dungeon, but had it in your power to free yourself from your fetters and thus escape the danger, would you have to consider long before you acted ? I hardly believe it : but on the contrary, I am of opinion, that you would, without any delay, loosen your chains, and thus escape all further danger. Behold ! as long as you are in mortal sin, you are a prisoner of Satan, enchained by your sin, and you are in continual danger of being banished into the dungeon of hell, whence there is no return. You can free yourself from your fetters by a good confession. The priest, who has the power to bind and to loose, can release you from the chains of your sins, and in this manner you can escape the danger of eternal imprisonment. Are you, therefore, not extremely foolish, if you, by wantonly deferring your penance, remain in danger ? Consider what it means—to be eternally imprisoned in hell. You are not one hour of the day secure

from being precipitated into it ; can you therefore delay one single moment ? Oh ! heed what you do ! “ We must hasten,” says St. Ambrose, “ for, life is short, and the greatest danger is in deferring.” Still greater is the danger, if after you have freed yourself from the fetters of sin, you allow yourself to be again bound with them, or rather you again enchain yourself by a detestable relapse into your former evil doings. Saint Leonard never admonished any of the released prisoners not to return into their former bondage, nor to enchain themselves with new irons : because he knew that not one of them would commit so foolish an action. Why then are you so senseless, that after having gone to confession, you commit new sin, and thus deliver yourself again to Satan ? If some one went wantonly back again into prison after having been released, he would not be worthy of being released anew, nay, he would not even deserve pity should he die in it. Thus you deserve no pardon, if you wantonly cast yourself into sin again ! one could hardly pity you, should you go to destruction in it. “ Whoever, after having been restored to health, again in a reckless manner, wounds himself, deserves not to be healed again,” says St. Lawrence Justinian ; “ and whoever, after having received pardon, sins again, deserves not to be again cleansed or forgiven.”

SEVENTH DAY OF NOVEMBER.

ST. ENGELBERT, ARCHBISHOP OF COLOGNE.

The parents of St. Engelbert were of high nobility; his father was Count of Bergen, his mother, Countess of Gelders. Both took the utmost care to have their son thoroughly instructed as well in virtue and piety, as in the liberal arts and sciences. Engelbert, however, manifested a great inclination to enjoy life, and a passionate desire for honors and riches. But God guarded him from falling into those vices which are so common to youth. Nature had endowed him with an unusual mind and great talents, which, combined with high rank, procured him, even in youth, several important positions, till, at last, in 1215, he was chosen Archbishop of Cologne. From that moment he became a different man, seeking nothing but to promote the honor of God and the welfare of those under his charge, and to ornament and richly endow churches and convents. The rights and liberties of his Archbishopric he defended most energetically, even against his own friends and relatives. Every one had free admission to him; he listened to all most patiently and endeavored to satisfy them, and furthered their good by all means in his power. No sooner was he aware that any one wished to present a petition, or to speak to him, than he was ready to listen and to grant whatever was not contrary to justice or duty.

One day, while he was sitting in judgment at his palace, a poor widow appeared, who desired a lawyer to represent her concerns. Engelbert said: "Good woman, you know your own wants best. Tell me yourself in what they consist." Some of the gentlemen present disapproved of this, as it was against the prevailing custom, and wished to appoint a lawyer for her. "The woman," they said, "will make her statement in too silly a manner." The Archbishop replied: "We shall understand the plain words of this woman well enough. There is no need of digression or delay." At another time, he was about to set out on a journey, when a poor man came to complain that a man of power had unjustly deprived him of his possessions. Engelbert listened to him patiently, and although his attendants reminded him that he had to travel a long way, and ought

not to delay, as the man could return on another day, the just and conscientious bishop would not begin his journey until he had given the poor man a letter to the rich oppressor, ordering him to restore what he had taken. Of his officers and councilors he most earnestly required justice, and severely punished those who trespassed against the laws. Towards the poor he was extremely merciful and kind, giving them clothing, nourishment and dwellings. No one left him uncomforted. He took indigent priests to his table and gave them his own garments. To all religious he showed great respect, and allowed no wrong done to go unpunished. He fasted one day every week in honor of the Blessed Virgin, and daily prayed that he might live and die under her protection. For the renovation of St. Peter's Church, as the grandest and most venerable church on earth, he gave large sums of money, and had also a golden chalice made for it which was studded with precious jewels, that had been presented to him by several princes, and kings. On account of these and other great virtues, Engelbert stood in great esteem with every one. The Emperor Frederic respected him so highly that when he went to Italy, he left to him the administration of the Empire in Germany, and also the guardianship of his son Henry. Both offices were discharged to the great satisfaction of the Emperor and the entire land. It would have been very beneficial if Engelbert had been permitted to continue for many years so holy a career; but in the ninth, or as others say, in the tenth year of it, a violent death ended his life and labors.

Frederic, Count of Isenburg, a cousin of the holy bishop and protector of the famous princely abbey at Essen, had for a long time oppressed this religious house and deprived it of many revenues. Pope Honorius and the Emperor Frederic, to whom the religious of the above abbey had gone with their complaints, commanded Engelbert to assist the oppressed. Engelbert admonished the Count, in writing as well as by word to abstain from his wrongful dealings, and even promised him a considerable yearly pension, out of his own revenues, in order to induce him to return to the path of justice. But all was in vain, and when at last the Count feared that the bishop would use force, he made the resolution to kill him. The Saint had been invited to consecrate a church out of the city; the day of his departure was appointed; and no sooner had the wicked Count heard of it, than he determined to use that occasion to put his murderous designs into execution. On the eve of his departure, St. Engelbert received an anonymous letter warning him of the snares laid for him by the Count of Isenburg. He

read this letter in the presence of the bishop of Minden, and then cast it into the fire, saying that his cousin could not harbor such criminal thoughts. But not to neglect anything for the greater security of his soul, he made on the same day a general confession during which he shed many tears and prepared himself for death. After that he said, quite consoled and cheered: "The will of God may be done now." His friends endeavoured to detain him at home; but he would not desist from his journey, saying: "I commend to Divine Providence my body and my soul." Thus prepared, he set out, accompanied by several officers of his court. The men of Count Isenburg, who were to assassinate the bishop at a given signal, were placed in a wood through which he had to pass, and there waited for him. When he reached this wood and was at some distance in advance of his attendants, he was suddenly attacked by the assassins, headed by the Count in person, and was so furiously struck by them, that forty-seven mortal wounds were counted on his body. St. Engelbert said nothing, during this martyrdom, but the words of his heavenly Master: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Thus did the holy Archbishop end his life, becoming a martyr to the cause of justice. His holy body was brought to Cologne. The many miracles, which, by the intercession of this Saint, were wrought upon the lame, the paralytic and other infirm, were evidence that God, who had crowned His faithful servant in heaven, wished to glorify him also on earth. One of the greatest miracles was the repentance of him who had plotted and committed this cruel murder. He was sentenced to a hard but well deserved punishment. His hands and feet were cut off, after which, he was broken on a wheel, and was thus left, for a whole night, in terrible suffering. But he bore his torment with resignation, confessing that he had deserved the punishment, and thus ended his life as a true penitent. All who witnessed his death ascribed his conversion to the intercession of St. Engelbert.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Engelbert manifested a great willingness to listen to the complaints of his subjects, whenever they came to him. Severe will be the account which those shall render to the divine Judge, who, although bound by their station to give ear to the complaints, prayers and de-

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mands of those under them, refuse to attend to them, especially if they are of the poorer or lower classes, widows or orphans; who speak harshly to them, refer them from one time to another, and give them no assistance or redress. God has threatened such people with a terri-

ble woe. This will be experienced, in due time, not only by all the mighty monarchs of this earth, but also by all judges, councillors and officers who have to administer justice ; as also by others of less importance, who are hard and unrelenting towards their servants and those under them ; who do not allow them to justify themselves, but who, without listening to the defense, drive them out of the house, retain their wages, or punish them in other ways. Reason and conscience demand that we do not judge or punish the accused without having heard their defense. How many have been deceived, to the great damage of their neighbor, by false accusers ! The pious and wise king David experienced this, when he believed an accusation brought against Mephiboseth, and deprived him of all his possessions, and yet afterwards found him innocent. (II Kings, xiv.) Hence it has become a proverb, that we must hear both sides. God himself, though he knew the crime of our first parents and that of the unfortunate Cain, yet, before denouncing their punishment to them, called them to account, to give an example to all in power, not to judge or to punish without investigating the matter and hearing the accused. The crime being investigated, punishment or reproof in accordance with the wrong committed, must be meted out, but Christian mildness and mercy must not be forgotten. "Even in the exercise of justice," writes St. Chrysostom, "mercy must have

some place." "When we reprove any one," writes St. Gregory, "always let mildness be united with severity."

II. St. Engelbert prayed for his murderers, after the example of Christ on the cross, as a sign that he forgave them from the depth of his heart. How do you act towards those who have offended you far less ? Have you ever prayed for them ? You perhaps say that this is too hard. But St. Augustine answers : "If this be a trial, so much greater will be the reward in the other world." Your God, Lord, and Judge commands you to pardon your enemies, and to love them with all your heart. Will you obey Him or not ? He menaces you with hell if you do not obey His words. Is it easier to be condemned than to forgive ? He promises you pardon for your sins and eternal salvation, if you do as He bids you. Is not that reward enough ? Besides this, Christ sets you the example. He prayed for His enemies from whom he suffered inexpressibly more than you suffer from yours. What kind of Christian can you be if you do not follow Christ's example in this great virtue ? "To take offense is human," says St. Jerome ; "but it behooves a Christian to moderate his wrath, and forgive his enemies." To-day, prove yourself a Christian. Pray for all those by whom you have ever been offended. "Father ! forgive them : for they know not what they do."

EIGHTH DAY OF NOVEMBER.

ST. GODFRIED, BISHOP OF AMIENS; AND ST. ITTA, COUNTESS.

The parents of St. Godfried lived for many years a very sad life, because they had not a child to inherit their noble name and great riches. At length, after long prayers, God gave them a son, whom they called Godfried. When he was five years old, they sent their only and beloved child into a monastery, that he might be instructed and piously reared by a most learned and virtuous abbot. It was soon perceptible that the Almighty watched over the little Godfried, and had chosen him for the religious state. A crane one day gave him so violent a blow between the eyes, that he was in danger of losing his sight, perhaps his life. The boy, calling on the name of Jesus, made the sign of the cross over the wound, and immediately all danger vanished, the wound was healed, and nothing remained but a small scar as a sign of the miracle which had taken place. This was justly looked upon as a manifestation of divine protection which watched over Godfried. A presage of his vocation to the religious state was seen in the fact that he endeavored to model his life, in his young years, after the example of the clergy. He was zealous in his prayers, industrious in his studies, and always ready for any kind of labor. The older he grew, the greater became his zeal in the discharge of all his duties, in which he took so much delight, that he no longer thought of returning to his home, but determined, in his own mind, to serve God in the religious state. As soon, therefore, as he arrived at the requisite age, he began his novitiate, and finished it by solemnly pronouncing the sacred vows. His superiors charged him with the duty of attending to the sick, which he fulfilled with the greatest joy, as a welcome opportunity to show his love to God and men. Words fail to describe how kind he was to the sick and how unweariedly he served them day and night. His care however, was not confined to their bodies, but extended also to their souls, as he proved by most zealously exhorting them, encouraging them to patience, reading to them from devout books, or praying with them. If he saw that their illness was dangerous, he persuaded them to receive the holy Sacraments, and to prepare themselves in time for a happy death. When he had

attained his twenty-fifth year, he was ordained priest, and as he had gained a great reputation on account of his virtue, wisdom and talents, he received from the Archbishop of Rheims the order to take on himself the administration of a half-ruined abbey, and restore it to its former prosperity. Difficult as was this undertaking, yet the untiring energy of the holy Abbot succeeded. He was an example to all his religious, exhorted them most kindly and earnestly, and before long, had all his affairs in such excellent order, that his abbey became celebrated far and near. Soon after, when the bishop of Amiens died, or as others say, had resigned his See, the clergy and the people resolved to elect Godfried as his successor. The election was unanimous; but the humble servant of God would not accept the dignity, until the papal Nuncio had most earnestly admonished him to obey the call of Heaven.

Godfried, as bishop, changed not in the least his former austere and holy conduct, but used his dignity as an opportunity to labor still more for the honor of God, the benefit of the church and the comfort of the poor. To the last, his episcopal palace was always open. He received them most kindly, served them personally at table, washed their feet, and allowed none to go away without alms. One day, a leper came to him at table and asked for some food. The Saint gave him a fish which was on the table. His steward murmured at this: but the bishop said: "Would it be right that I should have superfluity on my table, whilst Christ is suffering hunger in His poor?" At another time he met a half-naked beggar, and having no money with him he took off his coat and gave it. The vices and abuses, which were prevalent in the city, he sought to eradicate by continual preaching, admonition and exhortation, and, finally, also by earnest menaces, without allowing himself to be checked by the power of the great. But this apostolic zeal offended some wicked men, whom he had reprov'd, and who to revenge themselves, determined to take his life. They sent him, under a pretence of politeness and friendship, some poisoned wine. But God revealed the deceit to His faithful servant, and thus saved him from death. When, at last, the holy bishop perceived that, with all his endeavors, he could do but little good, he wished to divest himself of his functions, rather than longer administer them with such doubtful success. Hence, he secretly went into the monastery of the Grande Chartreuse, to attend to his own salvation during the years that were still left to him. He wrote, however, to the bishops assembled in Council at Beauvais, humbly requesting them to give the church at Amiens to some one else. The Council did not accept his resignation, but sent two deputies to

take him back to his forsaken flock, who received him with great rejoicing. Godfried began again to punish all vices with great severity and admonish all to alter their conduct, but with no greater success than before. Hence with prophetic spirit he denounced to the impenitent city, the divine punishment which was hanging over it. His words soon became true; for, fire fell on Amiens, as, in ancient times, it had fallen upon Sodom, and consumed the entire city, except the church, the palace of the bishop and a few houses. This changed the conduct of those who survived the catastrophe, but only for a short time. Deeply grieved the Bishop set out for Rheims, but was overtaken by sickness on the way. Odo, the Abbot of St. Crispin, brought him to his monastery, where, after receiving the Sacraments, the holy bishop raised his eyes towards heaven, and gave his soul to God. His purity and innocence, he carried with him inviolate to the grave, in 1118.



St. Itta was born of the Counts of Kirchberg, in Suabia, not far from Ulm, in the year 1160. Having passed her youth piously, under the care of her parents, she was married, when 18 or 19 years of age, to Henry, Count of Toggenburg. The young couple lived, for a considerable time, in great love and harmony, until an unforeseen accident not only destroyed it, but also occasioned a sad tragedy. It was the custom of the Countess, once or twice a year to have her clothing aired and examined. Her jewels and necklaces were on these occasions laid upon a table to be inspected and cleaned. One day, having placed her magnificent wedding-ring, a gift from the Count, among these articles, she left the room, locked the door and went about her household affairs. During her absence, a raven, who had his nest in the neighborhood, flew into the room, seized the ring in his beak and carried it to his nest. It was found, soon after, by one of the servants, who, instead of returning it at once, put it on his finger and showed it to some of his fellow-servants. A valet of the Count, recognizing the ring, conceived the horrible suspicion that the Countess had been faithless, and, without delay, made known the fact to his master. The Count, in great rage, called the hunter into his presence, and had no sooner beheld the ring on his finger, than he commanded him to be tied to the tail of a horse, and to be dragged over rocks and bushes until he expired. Having given this unjust command, he ran still trembling with rage, into the room of the innocent Countess, reproached her with infidelity, listened not to her justification,

but deaf to her prayers, tears and supplications, dragged her to the battlements of the castle, which stood upon a high rock, and cast her into a terrible abyss, convinced that she would be dashed to pieces. But divine Providence watched miraculously over the innocence of the holy Countess, who although precipitated from a height of more than 400 feet, remained as unharmed as if Angels had carried her. Recognizing the miracle which the Almighty had wrought, she gave Him her most fervent thanks, and resolved to pass the rest of her life in the same place, although it was a wild chasm, unfrequented by man, and the dwelling of wild beasts. The holy Countess built herself a poor little hut to shelter her, and looked for some herbs and water with which to appease her hunger and thirst. The Almighty, who had fed the prophet Elias by means of a raven, took care also, in a miraculous manner, of His faithful servant, as she afterwards confessed. Itta lived in this lonely spot for several years very quietly, occupying herself in praising God and in pious meditations, whilst all thought her dead, until at last it pleased heaven to reveal her innocence. A hunter came to the place where Itta dwelt. Seeing the footprints of a human being in the sand, he followed them, and thus came to her hut. Entering it, he immediately recognized the Countess. Hastening home, the hunter informed the Count of the startling discovery, and led him to Itta's hut. At the sight of her, shame, grief and repentance almost broke the Count's heart, and his sobs deprived him of all power of speech. Having at last controlled himself, he sank at the feet of his innocent spouse, whom he had so long believed dead, and most humbly begged her to pardon him. He offered to make all possible reparation to her, and duly to punish the instigator of the cruelty he had committed, begging her to return with him to the castle and pass her days according to her own pleasure. Itta raised the Count from the ground, saying that she had long since forgiven him, and that she desired that he should leave unpunished him who had caused her such misery, as he had also been to her the unconscious instrument of numberless graces. But she said that she never could return to the castle again; and that the only favor she could ask was that the Count would build her a small dwelling-place at the foot of the mountain named Hornlein, where she might, in peaceful solitude, serve that God, who had so miraculously preserved her life. Her request was immediately granted; and when the little dwelling was finished, she lived in it, in austerity and poverty, as she would not receive anything from the Count, but maintained herself by asking alms. She left her house only to go to the church of a neighboring village to receive the blessed Sacrament, and

to devoutly assist at the divine office to the great edification of all. Some time later, when her strength began to fail, the nuns of a convent near by, requested her to pass the remainder of her life with them, that she might not be exposed to the danger of dying alone in her little dwelling, without receiving the holy Sacraments. Itta consented, but on condition that they would build her a hut next to the Church, where she might continue to live separated from all mankind. The nuns cheerfully complied with the request, as they were desirous of having near them a soul so dear to God. After a few more years spent in this new dwelling, she gave her soul, purified by sorrow and trial, and adorned with great virtues, into the keeping of her Father in Heaven. Her holy body was buried in the Convent Church at the Altar of St. Nicholas, and her shrine became celebrated by many miracles.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Did you observe how St. Godfried attended not only to the body, but also to the souls of the sick? To nurse the sick is a noble work of charity, and if you have an opportunity to do it, do not neglect it, because you can gain great merits. Your charity, however, must not be only for the body, but also, or rather, especially for the soul. Hence encourage them to bear their suffering patiently; read to them from some devout book; pray with them, and exhort them to draw spiritual benefit from their sickness. Should you observe that the sickness is mortal, inform the patient of it in a prudent manner, or speak to a priest that he may make it known, and prepare the sick person for the long eternity awaiting him. We do very wrong in not announcing in time to the sick the danger in which they are, or deceiving them with false hopes. For want of this timely notice and exhortation, many souls have gone to destruction. Had they been admonished in time, this would not have happen-

ed. How great then is the guilt of those who have neglected this! And why did they neglect it? Out of kindness, they say; for they did not wish to frighten the sick by announcing that death was near. Oh! how false, how cruel a charity! True charity seeks the welfare of its neighbor: but is this done by not informing him of his danger, and thus letting him die without due preparation? Should the patient be really somewhat startled, when he becomes acquainted with the true state of his health, what harm is done? It is better to be frightened and prepare for a happy death, than to live without any fear and die unprepared. Take heed that you be not the cause of the eternal damnation of a sick person. When you are sick yourself, beg to be plainly told of your danger, and do all that is necessary for a happy death, before it is too late.

II. When St. Godfried saw that after all his admonitions, the inhabitants of the city reformed not their conduct, he threatened them

with divine punishment, which soon after befell them. The Almighty does not always punish sinners immediately after they have become guilty of evil deeds; not because He does not see their wickedness, or because He esteems it as trifling; but because He is long-suffering and merciful, and gives them time to repent and do penance. If they continue in their godless course, He admonishes and menaces them by the sermons they hear at church, by their confessors, and by their own conscience. He threatens them with a sudden death, with the last judgment, with hell; not as if He had resolved to take them away by a sudden death, but that He may not be forced to cast them into hell. He seeks by threats to bring them to repentance, that they may not be lost for ever. This is taught by St. Chrysostom when he says: "God threatens us with hell, that he may not be forced to cast us into its flames." And St. Augustine writes: "If He wished to condemn us, He would be silent. No one that wishes to beat another, first cries to him: Take care!" And again he says: "If our Lord desired to punish us, He would not exhort us so often; against His will does He punish us; for, long before He has shown us how we may escape punishment; for whoever desires to beat you does not call to you: Take care and save yourself!" In this, God manifests a special mercy; for He exhorts sinners and menaces them with His wrath. But when the sinner heeds neither exhortations nor menaces, but, continuing in his evil ways, does no true penance; then the Almighty suddenly overtakes him, and punishes the more severely as He has waited longer. Listen to the words of St. Augustine: "It is a manifestation of God's patience, when He does not immediately punish the sinner; but

it is not a sign of negligence, nor of His esteeming our wickedness as trifling. He has not lost His might, but restrains it, that we may do penance. Hence it is to be feared, that the longer He waits for our reformation, the more severely will He punish us if we do not repent." St. Chrysostom says the same when he writes: "Those who sin much, have more reason to fear when they are not punished; for, their punishment will be greater, the longer God in His mercy delays it!" What then is to be done? Let him who has sinned, not abuse, to his greater punishment, the long-suffering mercy of the Almighty, but be converted and do penance.

In regard to the life of St. Itta, I cannot omit giving several instructions in a few words.

I. The valet of the Count did great wrong in allowing such a reason to arouse his suspicions against the pious Countess; and in disclosing them to one, whom, above all, he should have spared. How much evil he thus occasioned! Be slow and careful in suspecting and judging. Never reveal your suspicions to any, except to those whom your duty compels you to inform of them, and when you can hope that good may arise from it. We can never arouse suspicion in the fidelity of one or the other, without becoming guilty of great sin.

II. The Count did still greater wrong, by so easily believing his servant and by not investigating the matter, and giving no chance either to the innocent hunter, or to his own wife to justify themselves, but allowing himself to be carried away by his passion, and punishing them so cruelly. Learn from this that we must not be ready to believe accusers and slanderers. Much less

ought we to punish any one, before we have heard his defence and investigated the matter; and we ought never to punish any one when we are in a passion.

III. St. Itta suffers the wrong done to her patiently, forgives, from the depth of her heart, not only her husband, but also the wicked valet, and turns the terrible persecution into an occasion of serving the Almighty, who had protected her so miraculously. How do you suffer wrongs of much less weight done to you? Do you also forgive, from the depth of your heart, those who have wronged you? How do you profit by crosses and trials? Has not the Almighty visibly protected you, more than once, when your

life was in danger? Why do you not serve Him more zealously?

In conclusion, learn that God reveals the innocence of His faithful servants in His own good time, even in this world: and that He recompenses richly those who innocently suffer for love of Him. Therefore, if you have to suffer, refrain from murmurs or complaints; hope in God, and bear your cross patiently, out of love for Him. He knows when it will be time to bring your innocence to light, and reward you. "Expect the Lord, do manfully." (Psal. xxxvi.) "Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to render to every man according to his works." (Apoc. xxii.)

NINTH DAY OF NOVEMBER.

ST. THEODORE, SOLDIER AND MARTYR; AND ST. HUGH OF LINCOLN, BISHOP.

St. Theodore was born a heathen. When grown up, he went into the army, and though still young in years, gave many signal proofs of his valor. By associating with Christian soldiers, he came to the knowledge of the true faith, and no sooner was he convinced of its life-giving truth, than he embraced it, but without making his conversion known, following in this the example of many others at that period. When his heathen comrades used to sacrifice to their gods, he stole away to the Christian assemblies and assisted at them with great devotion, but had not the courage to confess Christ openly. When, however, the cruel command came from the Imperial Court, that all Christians should either leave Christ, or prepare themselves for the most terrible martyrdom. Theodore neither could nor would any longer hide his Christianity, but cried publicly and fearlessly: "I am a Christian, and ready to shed the last drop of my blood in defence of the Christian faith." Some heathens, hearing this confession, seized him and brought him before the judge, who had pity on him as he was young and of fine

appearance. He gave him a few days to consider whether he would renounce Christianity and thus make himself a partaker of the imperial grace, or end his life in the most horrid torments. Theodore desired no time for considering, but said: "It is not necessary that I consider long. I have long since determined rather to bear all possible pain, than to forsake the true faith." But he received the time offered him, to prepare himself better for the approaching trial. At the expiration of the appointed time, he desired to show by works what his determination was; hence he went during the night to a celebrated idolatrous temple and setting fire to it, burned it to the ground. At break of day, the people, filled with rage, sought everywhere for the perpetrator of the deed. Theodore voluntarily surrendered himself, saying: "What need is there for this seeking? I am he, who set fire to that temple of abominations, in which sacrifice was offered to Satan, and not to the true God." The heathens, wild with rage, dragged the fearless youth before the judge, who asked him whether it was true that he had burned the temple, and whether he repented of this sacrilege and would forsake the Christian faith. "As far as the first part of your question is concerned," said Theodore firmly, "I confess freely that I did, but I cannot add that I repent of it; on the contrary, I am ready to do the same at any moment. In regard to the Christian faith, I am so far from forsaking it, that I would rather die a thousand deaths." The judge foaming with wrath, commanded him to be cruelly beaten, and then cast into a dungeon, the air of which was damp and foul, with the threat that he should there die of hunger, if he changed not his mind. The Christian hero, however, was not terrified, but, turning to his God, called on Him for aid. In the middle of the night, Christ appeared to him in his sleep, and said: "Be of good courage; for I am with thee: fear not!" Theodore awoke, and began cheerfully to sing psalms, and to give thanks to the Lord for so gracious a promise.

After the expiration of some days, he was again brought before the judge, who, seeing him as firm as before, ordered him to be tied to a column, and torn with iron combs and burnt with torches. This torture was more than cruel; for the executioners did not cease until the ribs were almost bare. But the greater the cruelty of these barbarians, the more Theodore rejoiced, repeating the words of the Psalmist: "I will praise and exalt the Lord at all times. His praise shall be ever on my lips." As the tyrant saw that he effected nothing by this inhuman torment, he ordered Theodore to be burnt at the stake, as an enemy of the gods. On the way to the place of execu-

tion, Theodore saw one of his friends, who, pitying him most sincerely, shed bitter tears. "Cleonicus," cried Theodore; "follow me soon, I shall wait for thee!" As soon as the Christian hero had arrived at the stake, he crossed himself, approached it cheerfully, and with a beaming countenance began to sing the praises of God, which he continued to do until he expired in the flames and smoke. This glorious martyrdom happened in 304. St Gregory preached a magnificent sermon in honor of this holy martyr, in which he extolled his heroic constancy, and asked for his intercession as a glorious Saint reigning with Christ in heaven.



To this short sketch of the life of a soldier and knight of Christ, we will add the life of a holy bishop, who not only had a valiant warrior for his father, but who himself also fought as a brave Christian hero, for the honor of God and the liberties of the Church of Christ. This is St. Hugh, bishop of Lincoln, born in Burgundy, and descended from a noble family. When in his eighth year, he lost his mother; but, that nothing might be neglected in his education, his father gave him in charge of the regular Canons in a monastery not far distant, which he himself not long afterwards entered, in order to pass the remainder of his life in the service of God. Hugh remained in this monastery until he had reached his nineteenth year, and was instructed as well in virtue as in the arts and sciences. The Abbot of the monastery, having about that time occasion to visit the Carthusian monks near Grenoble, took Hugh along as his companion. The peace and happiness which reigned in that solitude so charmed the heart of the youth, that he conceived an intense desire to spend his life with those holy men, and, after much solicitation, he received from his Abbot the permission to do so. The evil spirit tormented the young novice for some time most violently with horrible temptations. Hugh took refuge in prayer, fasting, and other penances, to obtain divine aid. The thought of the presence of God, and confidence in the intercession of the divine Mother, made him at length victorious over the devil; for as often as he remembered the presence of the Almighty, and called on the Blessed Virgin, he felt such strength, that he was able to withstand the temptations, and at last entirely overcame them.

Eighteen years he had passed in the Chartreuse, when the fame of his virtues induced the King of England to choose him

as prior for the cloister at Witham. He administered his new functions with so much talent and modesty, that the clergy, after the death of the bishop of Lincoln, elected him to that See. The humble servant of God would not consent to occupy so high a place, and represented his incapacity in strong language, begging them with tears to choose another. When, however, on the second election, every voice was for him, his objections were no more regarded, and he was obliged to accept the dignity. As bishop, his virtues shone still more brightly, and he endeavored, with truly apostolic zeal, to labor for the honor of God and the salvation of souls. Soon after he had entered upon his administration, he surrounded himself with holy and learned men, in order to make use of their counsel. He gave no one a parish of whose virtue and knowledge he possessed not sufficient proofs. No recommendation, no protection of the nobility, not even of the king himself, could move him to admit, among the number of his clergy, any one whose conduct had not been exemplary. His own life was so blameless, that he was considered not only the model of prelates, but a living mirror of holiness. The lives of the holy bishops, which he read daily, assisted him greatly in his striving after perfection, as he was desirous to imitate them.

He was extremely compassionate to all who were needy, sick or forsaken. He often knelt down before lepers and kissed their ulcers. He used frequently to wash the feet of thirteen beggars, after which he dismissed them with rich alms. The dead he accompanied to the grave, so as not to omit any work of Christian charity. A scoffer, one day, saw the Saint kiss the feet of a leper, and said: "St. Martin kissed the feet of a leper only once, and cured him immediately; while this bishop continually kisses them, and yet no one is cured!" St. Hugh answered: "St. Martin healed with his kisses the body of the leper; but these lepers cure my soul by my kisses." In abolishing abuses and protecting the rights of the Church, he manifested great strength of mind, and opposed even the royal commands when they were against the divine laws or the rights of the Church or Clergy. This procured him at one time the displeasure of King Henry II., to such a degree, that orders were issued for his banishment from the country and for the confiscation of all his possessions. But when the unjust sentence was to be executed, the Almighty showed how greatly He is displeased when His anointed are wronged. One of the king's officers became immediately possessed by the Evil One; and after being tormented for some time, was strangled. Others were overtaken by terrible diseases, and so tormented, that they expired miserably. This deterred

others from executing the royal command ; and the king durst not proceed further against the Saint whom God defended. What merited for St. Hugh this wonderful protection of heaven, was his fervor in prayer, and his zeal in all other devout exercises. He had his appointed hours for prayer as well as for work ; and at his hours of devotion would not attend to anything else, nor put off his prayers to another time. For this fidelity he was one day visibly rewarded ; for, having made an appointment to set out for a certain place, on that day, he was waited upon by the priests, who were to accompany him, earlier than had been agreed upon. As he had not finished his usual devotions, he delayed his departure. The priests who would not wait, went their way and fell into the hands of robbers, who plundered them and dragged them miserably away. The holy man set out after he had said his prayers, and arrived safely at the place of his destination. The sacrifice of Holy Mass he performed with such devotion, that he had several times the grace to see the Lord, in the form of a lovely child, in the Host. His faith in the presence of Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament was so strong, that when, one day, blood was seen miraculously streaming from a sacred Host on the altar, the Saint having been called to see the miracle, said : " To confirm my faith, I need not see this miracle ; for I have never doubted that Christ was substantially present in the Holy Eucharist." It is also related that he retired at least once every year, into his beloved monastery at Witham, and remained there a few days, in order to renew his spiritual life. During this time he conformed in everything to the regulations of the cloister.

At last, in the year 1200, on the 17th of November, God called His faithful servant, by a happy death, to receive the reward prepared for him in heaven. A severe sickness informed the holy man of his approaching end, and he joyfully hailed the message. After receiving the Holy Sacrament, he foretold the many calamities which would befall the country. The priests who were present recited aloud the office of Compline, and when they came to the words of St. Simeon : " O Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace," the holy bishop, who was lying upon sackcloth strewn with ashes, gave his soul to the Almighty, in the 60th year of his age.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. St. Theodore was offered time to consider if he would renounce the true faith or suffer the most cruel tor-</p>	<p>ments. But he desired no time for consideration as he had long before determined rather to endure any-</p>
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thing than abandon his faith. Oh, how valuable a lesson this is for those who are tempted to sin either by Satan or by men. Many vacillate for some time as if not knowing what to do. They would like to consent on account of temporal gain; but are restrained on the other hand by the fear of hell. Sometimes they seem unwilling to consent, and at other moments they laugh and jest with those who entice them to do evil; they calculate the chances of the temptations and play with them. How horrible a way of acting! Does it then require time to consider whether we ought to obey God or the devil? whether we shall prefer a momentary pleasure to the eternal joys of Heaven? Oh shame! A true Christian will not long vacillate, or require time to consider. This itself is wrong and leads to greater evil. Armed with strength and heroism, we ought to determine immediately, like St. Theodore not to offend the Almighty. We should say without any hesitation to the evil spirit or to any one sent by him to tempt us: "Depart Satan; I will not offend the Lord!" If we negotiate with Satan, and lend him our ear, we are near falling. If Eve, our unhappy mother, had repulsed the serpent and not held with him a long conversation, she would not have fallen. St. Theodore acted wisely and followed Eleazar, of whom Holy Writ relates that, menaced with death if he would not eat what was forbidden by the divine law, he did not consider long, but immediately replied, that he would rather die, (II Macc. vi.) Therefore we must, without any hesitation, rather die than sin and offend God.

II. The thought of the presence of God was one of the most efficacious means which St. Hugh employed to conquer the temptations of Satan. Use the same and you

will experience its strength. "Thinking of God, we forget vice," says St. Chrysostom. "He who thinks of God, is far from all sin," writes St. Jerome. It is an article of faith, that God is omniscient, that He sees, hears and knows everything. The Evil Spirit seeks to rob us of this important truth to entice us to sin. If he has once brought us so far that we believe that God sees us not, or knows nothing of us, he has gained everything. St. Augustine says: "Man falls easily into the most abominable vices, when he imagines that God does not see him or does not care for what is done on earth." God Himself tells the cause of many crimes of the Israelites in the following words: "The Lord seeth us not: the Lord hath forsaken the earth." (Ezechiel, viii.) In the book of the Wise Man it is written that the wicked says to himself: "Who seeth me? Darkness compasseth me about, and no man seeth me: whom do I fear? The Most High will not remember my sin." (Eccl. xxiii.) If then forgetfulness of the presence of God leads to vice, the thought of the ever watchful eyes of the Almighty must have great power in restraining us from sin. Hence I recommend to you, especially when you are tempted, or are in danger of sin, to think: "God sees me, though no man sees me. How dare I sin in His presence? God hears what I say; God sees what I do; God knows what I think; how dare I therefore speak, think, or do anything displeasing to Him?" Think of the words of the Wise Man: "The eyes of the Lord are far brighter than the sun, beholding round about all the ways of men, and the bottom of the deep, and looking into the hearts of men, into the most secret parts. (Eccl. xxiii.)

TENTH DAY OF NOVEMBER.

ST. ANDREW AVELLINO, CONFESSOR.

St. Andrew Avellino was born at Castro Nuovo, in the kingdom of Naples. To fear God and to avoid sin, were the maxims which his mother, from early childhood, implanted deep into his heart, and which became the rule of his entire life. While he studied at Senise, a lady sought to attract him by several presents which she sent him, but the chaste youth accepted not her gifts, and sent her word saying that she should trouble him no more, and might rest assured that he would rather die than consent to any evil. On another occasion when he was enticed to sin, he fled like the chaste Joseph. To escape similar temptations, he determined to become a priest, and was ordained after he had finished his studies. For some time he devoted himself to the practice of Canon Law in the ecclesiastical courts; until one day, in the heat of his argument, a trivial lie escaped him. Soon after, while reading the holy Scriptures, the words, "The mouth that lieth, killeth the soul," came under his eyes, and his repentance was such that, from that moment, he renounced his profession in order to escape from the danger of offending God, and gave himself entirely to the sacred ministry. By associating frequently with the religious of the Theatine Order, he conceived the desire of joining their number, which he did in 1556. It was on this occasion that he took the name of Andrew, in honor of the holy Apostle of that name, after whose example he desired to suffer much for the glory of God.

His eminent virtues induced his superiors to make him Master of Novices, though he had been only five years in the Order, and afterwards to charge him with the administration of several houses. He attended to all his duties to the greatest benefit of those under him. Besides the usual vows, he imposed upon himself two more. The first of these was to work continually against his own inclinations; the second, to make continual progress in perfection. The fervent love he bore to God and men induced him to employ all his leisure moments in prayer and in laboring for the salvation of souls. Before entering into religion, he had been accustomed to give six hours daily to prayer, but as he could not, as a religious, spare so much time

during the day, he took a part of the night for this sacred duty. He benefited mankind much by preaching and hearing confessions. He reformed many a hardened sinner, restrained others from falling again, reconciled embittered minds, and led numberless souls to heaven. God manifested more than once, by miracles, how agreeable the endeavors of the Saint were to Him. One night as he returned home, with his companion, from the house of a sick man whose confession he had heard, a violent storm extinguished the light that was carried before them; but then such a brightness emanated from the Saint's body that the way was made clear through the darkness, whilst, at the same time, neither he nor his companion was touched by the rain. Many similar events, as also the frequent visions of Saints, the gifts of prophecy and of reading the hearts of men, but above all the many examples of heroic virtue which he gave to others, won for St. Andrew the highest regard. St. Charles Borromeo, the holy Cardinal, esteemed him greatly, and made use of his zeal on many occasions. Notwithstanding this, the holy man had so low an opinion of himself, that he regarded as nothing his great and arduous labors to further the honor of God and the salvation of souls; looked upon himself as a great sinner, and frequently evinced great fear in regard to his salvation. "If they," said he, "must regard themselves as useless servants, who have done all their duty, what must I do, who have done so small a part of what I ought to have done?" Sometimes he would look up to heaven and sigh: "Will that magnificent mansion of the blessed spirits allow the entrance of one so miserable, despicable and sinful as I am?" From this fear, however, he was afterwards freed by a comforting vision. St. Augustine and St. Thomas of Aquin, both of whom he honored as patrons, appeared to him, consoled him, and promised him their aid, especially in that hour on which eternity depends. Andrew, taking heart, asked them whether he would enjoy eternal life? The answer was as follows: "The time of thy salvation has not come yet. But as in life everything is doubtful and uncertain, follow our advice: struggle, with the greatest perseverance, on the battle-field of virtue, as thou hast done till now; and thus thou wilt gather a treasure of merit, and God will not close to thee the gates of heaven." With these words the Saint consoled himself, and not only continued his zeal in the practice of virtue, but increased it daily. During the last 18 years of his life, he allowed himself neither meat, nor eggs, nor fish; his nourishment consisted of beans only, of which he had always enough cooked to last him three days. When advised to change his diet, on account of his advanced age, he said: "Though at the age of 83 years, I am ex-

cused from the law of fasting, I find when thinking of my sins and my indolence in the service of the Most High, that I am obliged to fast and to observe other austerities, in order to appease the wrath of God." Thus spoke he, who had ever preserved his first innocence. His bed was a sack of straw on two boards. He daily scourged himself to blood. Not content with all this, he daily begged the Almighty to send him something to suffer. The greatest wrongs he bore with invincible meekness; in persecutions and trials, he evinced heroic patience, and he met his enemies with truly Christian gentleness. This was especially experienced by the man who had cruelly murdered the son of the Saint's brother. The holy man exhorted his brother neither to seek nor demand vengeance. He knew the murderer, but revealed him not; and when the wretch was at last discovered and arraigned before the judges, Andrew implored mercy and pardon for him.

Our Saint's devotion to the passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, was the cause of his earnest desire to suffer more and more. He was often heard to say: "Ah! what is all that I do and suffer compared with what my Jesus did and suffered for my sake? O, that I might, for His honor, be torn with scourges and pierced with nails, and expire on the Cross for Him!" Not less deep was his devotion to the Blessed Sacrament; and at the time of holy Mass, his whole countenance glowed with divine love. To the very last day of his life, though he was almost entirely exhausted, he insisted on saying Mass; but he had hardly begun the Psalm at the foot of the Altar, when he was struck with paralysis. He was then carried to his room, where the last Sacraments were administered to him. Having received them, he blessed all those who were present, and peace and happiness shone from his countenance. After this, he turned his eyes upon an image of the Blessed Virgin, whom during all his life he had greatly loved and honored, and expired in the 88th year of his life. His face beamed after his death with a truly divine radiance, and God proclaimed the glory which the Saint enjoyed in heaven, by many and great miracles.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. A small, involuntary lie was repented of by St. Andrew, during his whole life; and in order not to be tempted to sin thus again, he renounced a profession in which he believed there was danger of repeating the offence. What do you say to this, you who have made</p>	<p>almost a habit of lying and are very little disturbed by it? It is true that not every lie is a great sin; and the verse which frightened St. Andrew so much, is to be understood to refer specially to lies by which great wrong is committed. But it is nevertheless a fact, that a</p>
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lie is an offense done to the Almighty. It is also true that those who have the habit of lying in small things, easily transfer this habit to things of importance, and even confirm their lie with an oath, which is surely a mortal sin. It is false to say or imagine that it is no wrong to tell a lie in jest, or for the sake of preventing a quarrel. We need, of course, not always tell what we know, and must often express ourselves very guardedly; but to say what is not true is always a sin, be it done in jest, to please others, to prevent a quarrel or other damage, or, as the saying is, because we cannot help ourselves. Such lies are called "white lies," and we become guilty of venial sin, by becoming guilty of them.

But by other lies, we may commit great sin, because by them we seek to harm our neighbor, or do actually harm him. We also commit great sin by lying in the confessional, when, for instance, we voluntarily lessen the number of our mortal sins, or tell not the truth in regard to what is essential to a perfect confession. Finally, a lie is a great sin, as I have already mentioned above, when we confirm it with an oath, fully conscious of what we are doing, although it may be a matter of but little consequence, and of no harm to others. Examine your conscience, whether you have not frequently committed wrong by lying; and endeavor earnestly to reform.

II. St. Andrew sometimes sighed while gazing up to heaven: "Will that beautiful abode of the Blessed give admittance to so miserable, so contemptible, so sinful a man as I am?" So holy a man, who had never been guilty of a mortal sin, and who had so zealously labored in good and noble deeds, feared that heaven might be locked against him! Oh! how much more reason have you to fear, knowing that you have spotted your conscience with

so many sins! Fear without disguise; for, you have reason. But your fear must not be such as to make you despondent, but such as to incite you to do all that is necessary to gain life everlasting, and to avoid all that may close the gates of heaven against you. For the rest, take to heart the advice given by St. Augustine and St. Thomas to Andrew: "Fight valiantly on the battle-field of virtue. God will not close the entrance of salvation to you." "For the Almighty," says St. Augustine, "has created us for the eternal joys of heaven, and not to precipitate us into the unquenchable fire." Thomas à Kempis writes: "Be watchful and diligent in the service of God, and think often: why have I been created? If you are faithful and fervent in the performance of your work, God will be faithful and generous in rewarding you."

In conclusion, consider well the two beautiful sayings of St. Andrew, which are related above. The first of these is what he answered when advised not to fast so strictly, on account of his great age; the second is what he was frequently heard to say when contemplating the bitter passion and death of our Lord.

The first will serve to make you carefully observe the fasts; for you certainly have more reason to appease the wrath of an indignant God, than St. Andrew had. Consider the second in hours of suffering; for you can say with more truth, that your cross is nothing compared with that which your dear Saviour bore. This will animate you to patience in your trials. "Who can refuse to suffer, when thinking that his Lord suffered so infinitely more? The pain and suffering of the Master decreases the pain and suffering of the servant. Christ crucified has left us an example, that we may follow in His steps." Thus writes St. Lawrence Justinian,

ELEVENTH DAY OF NOVEMBER.

ST. MARTIN, BISHOP OF TOURS.

St. Martin, celebrated throughout the whole Church of Christ, and praised and exalted in the works of several holy Fathers, was born in Hungary of heathen parents. Having reached his tenth year, he went often secretly to the Church of the Christians to assist at Mass and to listen to instructions. All seemed to him so good and holy, that without the knowledge of his parents, he desired to be enrolled among the catechumens, that is, among those who are to receive holy baptism. From that moment, he became devoted to prayer, and performed other good works with great zeal. At the age of fifteen years, he was enlisted in the Roman army, in which he served until the reign of Julian, without, however, indulging in any of the vices so common among soldiers. An oath, a lie, an indecent expression was never heard from his lips. The time that most of his comrades passed in gaming and drinking, he devoted to prayer and devout reading. His kindness to the poor is known to the whole Christian world. In the depth of winter, he once met, not far from Amiens, a half-naked beggar, who asked an alms for Christ's sake. Martin had no money with him, but unwilling to send the man away without comfort, he took the cloak from his shoulders, cut it into two pieces and gave one of them to the beggar. His comrades laughed at him, but Martin, in a vision during the following night, saw Christ covered with the piece of the cloak, and heard Him say to the Angels surrounding Him : " Martin, not yet baptized, has covered me with this ! " This vision not only comforted Martin greatly, but also induced him to give himself wholly to the service of the Most High. Hence, in his eighteenth year, he received holy baptism, left the army, and, in order to learn how to lead a Christian life, went to the holy bishop Hilarius, who joyfully received him and instructed him in virtue and holiness. Being thoroughly instructed, he went, with the consent of his holy teacher, to Hungary, intending to convert his parents. His mother and many others were easily persuaded to embrace the true faith, but his father proved ob-

stinate. Martin was sorely grieved at this, and desired to remain longer in the hope of yet gaining his father and other heathens; but the Arians drove him away. He therefore returned to his holy master in France. With his consent, he built a small monastery outside the walls of Poitiers, and lived there, with a few disciples, in the practice of austere penance. The fame of his sanctity soon spread far and wide, especially when it became known that he had recalled to life a man who had died before receiving the holy sacrament of regeneration. On account of this and other miracles, Martin was obliged, after the death of the bishop of Tours, to become his successor. Hard as it seemed to the humble servant of God to receive the episcopal dignity, yet he administered his new functions with wonderful zeal and untiring energy. He erected a monastery not far from Tours, into which he gathered a community of eighty monks, with whom he lived an extremely severe life. His clergy were instructed by him in such a manner, that they were always able and willing to assist him efficaciously in the care of his flock. With some of these, he visited his entire diocese, preaching everywhere, administering the sacraments, visiting the sick, and giving alms to the poor. He was most earnest in exhorting the faithful to make their churches fit dwelling-places for the Majesty of God, and to behave in them with due reverence. He himself was often seen to tremble when he stood at the entrance of a Church; and being asked the reason of it, he replied: "Shall I not tremble for fear, when appearing before the Highest Majesty, before my God, my Judge?" While at Church he was never seen either sitting or standing, except when his office or the service required it; and unless it was necessary, he never spoke a word while there. He was a shining example of every virtue to all under him, laity as well as clergy. His historians say that he was never seen angry and never heard to laugh aloud. One of his priests, who had previously been very virtuous, gradually lost his fervor and began to show some levity in his conduct, for which he was kindly rebuked by the bishop. Offended at the admonition, the guilty man endeavored to arouse in others ill-feelings against the Saint, and went so far as to blame all his actions and to abuse him publicly. St. Martin bore it all patiently, treated him with great sweetness, and prayed unceasingly for him. All were greatly astonished at this, and some endeavored to persuade the Saint to banish the wicked man from the convent. Martin however, said: "If Christ bore with Judas, why should I not bear with Britius?" He then foretold that this very Britius would be his successor in the See. No one would believe this, and even Britius laughed at it; but time revealed the truth of

the prophecy: for, Britius soon commenced a different course of life, and on St. Martin's death, was raised to the episcopal throne of Tours. Greatly as we must admire the patience and meekness of the holy bishop towards offenders, the zeal which he manifested in destroying idolatry, which still lingered in many places, was no less worthy of praise. Wherever he found an idolatrous temple, he destroyed it either by his prayers or by force, though not without danger of his life. One day, he was about to fell a tree, because the heathens used it for their idolatry. They opposed him, most violently; at length, one of them said: "Behold! we ourselves will fell the tree if you promise that, as it falls, you will support it in your hands. By this sign we shall be convinced of the might of the God whose word you preach." The Saint promised without any hesitation, to do as they desired. The tree was cut so that it would fall towards Martin; and when it came down, he made the sign of the Cross and stretching out his hands, not only received the tree into them, but threw it back to the opposite side, without injuring any one. By this and several other miracles, the holy bishop not only converted a great many heathens, but also made a great impression on the Arians, who, at that time, cruelly persecuted the Catholics. The holy man was greatly esteemed and highly honored on account of his apostolic zeal, his great virtues, and the gifts bestowed upon him by the Almighty. Therefore Satan was much embittered against him and sought to ruin him. One day he appeared to the Saint, in royal magnificence, saying that he was Christ, and had come to visit him. Martin, startled at this apparition, said: "My Lord Jesus Christ did not say that He would come in such splendid array, but in the same form in which He ascended to heaven." At these words Satan vanished. Many other incidents of the life of this Saint we omit, in order to give space for a short account of his death.

The holy man had reached his eighty-first year, when he desired to be released from the fetters of earth, and go to God. The Almighty visited him with a dangerous fever and revealed to him his approaching end. His disciples grieved greatly at the thought of his being taken from them, and said with weeping eyes: "Why dost thou leave us, father? To whom dost thou give us? Wolves will attack thy flock, and when our shepherd is gone, who will defend us? Have pity on us and remain yet for a time among us." The Saint sighed, and prayed to the Almighty: "Lord, if I am needful to Thy people, I do not refuse the labor. But not my will, but Thine be done."

Hereupon he received the holy sacraments, and lying down, in his penitential garment, upon the floor strewn with ashes, he said: "Thus must a Christian soldier die in his armor." And when his disciples, perceiving that he lay continually on his back, and kept his eyes fixed on heaven, said to him that, in order to ease his pain, he should turn to the right or left side, he replied: "Rather let me look up to heaven than towards the earth." In his last hour, the tempter came once more to the holy bishop, who, fearlessly addressing him, said: "Wherefore art thou standing there, thou bloodthirsty beast? Thou hast nothing to expect from me." With these words, the holy bishop closed his eyes and ended his holy life, in the year of our Lord 402. St. Severin, bishop of Cologne, although far away, saw his spotless soul borne to heaven by Angels. The same was witnessed by many others. The Roman Martyrology testifies that St. Martin, during his life, raised three from the dead. Many other great miracles are to be found in his biography. In conclusion, we add the words of St. Gregory of Tours in his praise: "Oh happy man," said he, "at the close of whose life, the Saints of the Most High sing hymns of praise, the Angels rejoice and come in crowds to meet him, the Evil One is confounded, and the Church of God strengthened in virtue."

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Martin trembled on entering a Church and never sat, stood or spoke while there, because he remembered that he was before God, his Judge. Oh, that all who go to Church, would take to heart that they appear before their Judge! How differently would they conduct themselves! May you, at least, think earnestly of it. Say to yourself: "I go to my God; I shall appear before Him, who, in a little while, will be my Judge, and who will sentence me for all eternity. At this moment He is still my Saviour, ready to pardon my sins and give me grace, that I may go to heaven. But soon He will judge me according to His justice." Considering all this carefully, you will surely

avoid everything that is displeasing to God, and you will guard against the least disrespect. "This place is terrible. It is nothing less than the house of God and the gate of heaven," said the Patriarch Jacob of the place where he had seen, in his sleep, the Lord of Heaven. He was afraid, because he had dared to sleep there, though he knew not that the place was holy. How much more reason have you to fear when you are irreverential in Church, as you know that it is, in a grander sense, the house of God and the gate of heaven.

II. The Evil Spirit, who appeared to St. Martin in his last hour, was easily driven away with the words: "Wherefore art thou stand-

ing there, thou blood-thirsty beast? Thou hast nothing to expect from me." Consider well; if Satan dares to tempt so holy a man; if he can fill him with fear and confusion; what will he not do to those who have led an indolent, lukewarm, or even sinful life? "The devil has descended upon you," says Holy Writ; "he is full of great wrath because he knows that he has but little time." St. Martin feared not, but drove him away, because his conscience was free from anything with which Satan could reproach him. Oh! happy is he, who cannot be reproached in his last hour with anything that he has not confessed already and expiated. St. Martin was accustomed to fight during his life with Satan; therefore he easily conquered him in death. Think deeply on it; those who accustom themselves during their lives

to fight with Satan's temptation, will be able, by the grace of God, to do the same on their death-bed. But how will those fare, who, during the greater part of their lives, have consented to the temptations of Satan? Oh! there is good reason to fear that, in their last hour, they will do the same, and thus go to eternal perdition. Impress this point well upon your mind, and accustom yourself in time to fight bravely against Satan and his temptations, as otherwise you are lost for all eternity. "Vainly do they promise themselves security in their dying hour, who, during their life, resist not temptation," says St. Leo. "If Satan finds any one who is not watchful, and well experienced in fighting, he will easily conquer him," says St. Cyprian.

TWELFTH DAY OF NOVEMBER.

ST. HOMOBONUS, CONFESSOR.

A grand example of virtue is presented to us by the Catholic Church in St. Homobonus, who as a layman and a merchant arrived at great holiness. The famous city of Cremona, in Lombardy, was his native place. His parents were not rich in worldly goods, but very pious. They gave their son the name of Homobonus, that is, "a good man;" and this name was a presage of the kindness and charity which were to mark his life. His parents gave him an excellent education, and the benefits he derived from it extended over his whole life. As soon as Homobonus was beyond the years of childhood, his father, who was a merchant, took him into business. Homobonus, enlightened by God, recognized the manifold dangers of sin into which he would be thrown by commerce, and was therefore very guarded in all his actions. Every morning, he recited his prayers and assisted at holy Mass; for he used to say: "One must first seek the kingdom of God. The success of

all affairs depends only on God." He was very careful not to become guilty of the least fraud, or even to take a lawful advantage, either in buying or in selling. He would not take a penny unjustly. He never asked more for his goods than the legitimate price. An oath or a lie, so common among merchants, was never on his lips. He was extremely conscientious in paying his debts, in order not to make others suffer by delay. Besides this, his manners were so kind, his words so modest, that he was beloved by every one; and therefore he had more customers and a greater income than any other merchant. The Sundays and Holy-days he employed only to the honor of God and the salvation of his soul. The greater part of these days he spent in the church, at prayer, listening to the word of God, and receiving the holy Sacraments; while his only pleasure at home was the reading of a devout book. Towards his parents he manifested, both as child and man, a reverential love and a perfect obedience. Hence, when they proposed to him that he should marry, he consented to their wishes, took in marriage the maiden whom his parents had selected for him and lived with her in Christian love and fidelity. He continued in business after the death of his parents, not, however, for the purpose of gaining earthly wealth for his own benefit, but to secure eternal possessions, by giving his temporal gain to the poor. He was not only kind to the poor, but liberal, so that he was called "The father of the poor." No one left him without receiving alms. For those who were ashamed to beg, he carried his gifts to their houses, comforted them and encouraged them to bear their trials patiently. His wife sometimes seemed to think that his liberality went too far, and feared lest, if he continued, she herself might, one day, come to want. Hence she counselled him to be more economical and not to draw every beggar of the city to his house. When she saw that all her words had no effect, she began to complain and murmur, and at last, even broke out into invectives and curses. Homobonus met her with gentleness, and said: "Do you then suppose that our temporal affairs will suffer, when we are compassionate and charitable to the poor? The word of God teaches us quite differently; Christ Himself has said: Give, and you shall receive." The woman, however, would not believe this until she had had a proof of it. A famine had come upon the city, and one day, so great a number of poor came to the house of Homobonus, that all the bread he had stored up hardly sufficed to satisfy them. The wife of the charitable man was not at home when this happened; but when she returned and went to fetch some bread for the table, she found the same

number of loaves she had left there; and on cutting one of them, she perceived that it was whiter and better than she had ever seen. Astonished at this, she asked the servant, who assured her that Homobonus had given all the bread to the poor; whence she understood that the Almighty had wrought a miracle to reward the charity of her husband and to reprove her own selfishness. Homobonus then bade her not to think that she would be impoverished by giving to the poor, and in future, to show herself more compassionate. At another time a similar miracle took place. The Saint had a small country-seat, the revenue of which he devoted entirely to the support of the helpless. One day, when he was taking out some wine to the laborers in this villa, he met some beggars, who asked him to give them a drink to appease their thirst. The kind-hearted man gave them the pitchers, bidding them take a good drink. The beggars needed no second invitation, but took the pitchers and left not a drop in them. The Saint, fearing that the laborers would become impatient at his long delay, if he returned home to fill his pitchers again, went, full of trust in God, to a neighboring well, filled the pitchers with water, blessed it and took it to the laborers. One after another partook of it, and all returned him thanks for having brought them such excellent wine. The Saint thought at first that they were not in earnest; but having tasted it, he found that it was truly wine. Silently thanking God, he resolved not to tell any one of the miracle; but one of the laborers had seen his master give the wine to the beggars, and fill the pitchers at the well. The miracle thus soon became known, and raised the holy man still more in the estimation of every one. He used the great influence which he possessed for the salvation of many souls, and by his devout discourses he brought many heretics to the true faith and many sinners to a better life. We have already related that he employed all the time that he could spare from business in prayer and devout reading. Even a portion of the night he devoted to these sacred exercises; for he rose in the middle of the night and assisted at matins in the neighboring Church of St. Aegidius; where he remained until the first Mass. Although orders had been given that the church should be opened for Homobonus, he was several times found praying before the altar or the Crucifix before the doors were yet opened. The Angels had done him the service to admit him into the house of the Lord.

At length, it pleased God to call His faithful servant from the place where he had passed so many hours in holy contemplation, to receive his eternal reward. One night, in 1197,

he had, according to his custom, assisted at matins and remained kneeling before the Crucifix until the morning Mass commenced. At the "Gloria in Excelsis," he stretched out both arms and then laying them in the form of a cross upon his breast, he expired, without having been sick or having shown any sign of agony. No sooner was he found dead in this position, than every one came running towards him, venerating him as a Saint. The holy body was buried in the same church, and God made his shrine celebrated by many miracles. The number of these was so great, that, in the following year, the Pope did not hesitate to place Homobonus among the Saints. In the year 1357, his holy body was exhumed and transported, with solemn ceremonies, to the Cathedral.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. All those who are merchants, or in other similar professions, should learn of St. Homobonus how to conduct themselves in the station to which they belong, if they desire to save their souls. We ought always to begin the day with fervent prayer; assist daily, if possible, and with great devotion, at Holy Mass; be careful to avoid deceit of every sort, as for instance, in weight or measure, by adulteration of the wares, or by retaining any portion of them for our own profit. We ought not to seek gain by unjust means; not ask more than is just for our goods or our work, and avoid lying, cursing, and other vices. We ought not to become addicted to slothfulness, gaming or drinking, but work earnestly, carefully and patiently. The Sundays and holidays we should pass as God and the Holy Church require of us; receive the Holy Sacraments frequently and with devotion; listen to sermons and instructions, and succor our neighbor with alms. By observing all these points, we may hope to gain everlasting life, in whatever station of life it may have pleased God to place us on earth.

In regard to alms-giving, all may learn from the life of St. Homobonus, that it does not impoverish us, but increases our temporal goods. St. Cyprian says: "If you fear to lose by giving alms, let me advise you to banish all such apprehension. I can assure you of quite the contrary." The Holy Ghost says: "Whoever gives to the poor shall never want." (Prov. xxviii.)

II. St. Homobonus died suddenly, without having been sick, and without having received the Holy Sacraments: but his death was nevertheless happy, as he was prepared for it by a holy life. To die suddenly, without receiving the holy Sacraments, is not in itself an unhappy death, just as to die after receiving the Holy Sacraments, is not always a happy death. Many have a long sickness before their end, and therefore have time enough to prepare themselves and to receive the Sacraments; and yet they may go to eternal destruction, because they do not receive them worthily, or become guilty of sin after having received them. Those who die suddenly, if they are in the grace of God die happily, even if they do not re-

ceive the Sacraments. You do well to pray daily, with the Church, to be delivered from a sudden death. But as you do not know the decrees of the Almighty, endeavor to maintain yourself continually in the grace of God. Retain nothing on your conscience which may give you fear in your last hour. Guard yourself against sin, which alone can make your death unhappy. And if, through weakness or wickedness you have been guilty of great sin, endeavor immediately to atone for it that you may again be admitted to the friendship of the Almighty, and not be taken away in your sin by a sudden death. The delay of penance, under the pretext that there is yet time enough, that God will receive you graciously, even at the last, and that He has promised to pardon sinners at whatever hour they return to Him, has made many mis-

erable for all eternity. "It is true that God has promised to forgive you if you repent and do penance; but He has not promised you to-morrow if you delay your repentance. You are right in saying: If I do penance, God will pardon. I cannot deny that the Almighty has promised pardon to all repentant sinners, but in the book of the Prophet wherein you read that God promises pardon to the repentant sinner, you will not find that He promises long life." Thus writes St. Augustine. Therefore, act according to my instructions. Do penance immediately after committing sin; endeavor to remain in the grace of God, and then leave to Him the hour and the manner of your death. He will certainly allow nothing to happen to you which is not for the welfare of you immortal soul.

THIRTEENTH DAY OF NOVEMBER.

ST. STANISLAUS KOSTKA, CONFESSOR, OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS.

St. Stanislaus Kostka, who, when still very young, was raised by the Almighty to great holiness, was a native of Poland, and the son of illustrious parents. Before he was born, his mother saw the holy name of Jesus upon her breast, which she regarded as a sign of the future sanctity of her unborn child. Stanislaus lived in the house of his parents until his fourteenth year, and was so innocent and pious, that all who knew him called him "Angel." This name he deserved particularly on account of his angelic purity. All that was in the least against this virtue caused him such disgust and horror, that he sank fainting to the floor, if any one, at his father's table, uttered an unchaste word. This happened not only once or twice, but so often, that his father would say, whenever any one made an offensive remark: "Let us change the conversation, or Stanislaus will presently kiss the floor." He never manifested any pleasure in luxurious garments,

in society, or in pastimes and amusements; his only enjoyment was prayer and study. When 14 years of age, he was sent with his elder brother, Paul, and a tutor, to Vienna, to continue his studies in a seminary which was under the direction of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus. But after some time this house was taken away from the Fathers, and Stanislaus was forced to make his home in the house of a Lutheran. Here he continued to live as he had done in the house of his parents and in the Seminary. His occupations were prayer and study: he daily assisted at two or three Masses, and frequently received holy communion, for which he prepared himself most carefully by fasting and fervent devotions. He frequented no public assemblies or theatres, and cared nothing for any of those pleasures that were so eagerly sought by his equals. Paul, his brother, was entirely different from him; his conduct was that of most young men of the nobility, and he wished Stanislaus to follow his example. The innocent youth had much to suffer because he refused to comply. For nearly three long years, he was persecuted by his brother, and not only abused by word, but often cruelly beaten. All this, however, could not move Stanislaus to change his holy conduct. He bore his brother's injustice with great resignation and endeavored to meet him with unaltered kindness. "I will live," said he, "in such a manner as I know is pleasing to my God, whether it pleases my brother or not." When urged to enjoy himself with others in the way usually adopted by the corrupt world, he would say: "I was born for a higher end." At night, when he supposed that his brother and his tutor slept, he rose from his bed, even in the midst of winter, and spent more than an hour in such fervent prayers, that he frequently fell into ecstasy. To the divine Mother, he bore from his earliest youth, a filial devotion, and daily recited the rosary in her honor. He chose the holy Virgin and Martyr, St. Barbara, as his especial patroness, because he had read that she obtained, for those who invoked her, the grace of receiving the holy Sacrament before they die. The efficacy of her intercession was experienced by himself. He became very ill, and though his most fervent desire was to receive the Blessed Eucharist, he could not hope that either his Lutheran landlord or his brother would grant his wishes. He, therefore, invoked his holy patroness, praying her not to let him die without having received the Viaticum. And behold! in the following night, St. Barbara appeared to him, accompanied by two angels, one of whom carried the sacred Host, and, approaching the youth, administered it to him. Soon after, the Blessed Virgin appeared to him with the divine Child, which she permitted him to embrace. She restored his health, and bade

him join the Society of her beloved son, Jesus. At the beginning of his sickness, an event took place that we must not omit to relate. The Evil One, wishing to fill the soul of the holy youth with fear and trembling, appeared to him in the form of a hideous dog, which ran toward him with open jaws, as if to devour him. Thrice he renewed the attack, but was as often repulsed by St. Stanislaus with the sign of the holy Cross. It was after this victory, that the visions just mentioned comforted and consoled him.

Stanislaus, filled with indescribable joy, arose from his bed in perfect health; and, after having given due thanks to God, to the Blessed Virgin and St. Barbara, he began to consider how he could obey the command of the divine Mother, and enter the Society of Jesus. He humbly requested at Vienna to be admitted into the Society; but the superior could not and would not receive him, without the consent of his parents, and of that there was no hope. Having consulted the Almighty and his confessor, the holy youth escaped during the night, and, in the guise of a pilgrim, went to Augsburg, and thence to Dillingen, where at that time Father Canisius was Provincial. As soon as the absence of Stanislaus was perceived at Vienna, Paul and his tutor pursued him, and, at one time, were on the point of overtaking him, when suddenly their horses stood still, and could not be induced to move. Paul, as well as the tutor, on perceiving this, acknowledged that the Almighty had taken the fugitive under His protection, and quietly returned home; while Stanislaus, guarded so miraculously by heaven, continued his journey. Between Augsburg and Dillingen, God bestowed another grace on him. On his way, he entered a church, as he desired to comfort and strengthen himself with the bread of Angels. He found, however, with deep grief, that the Lutherans worshipped there, and that he could not partake of the consolation he so ardently desired. But his sorrow was soon changed into inexpressible joy; for while he remained kneeling, in pious contemplation, he suddenly perceived a band of holy Angels, one of whom administered the Holy Eucharist to him.

Thus strengthened, he proceeded to Dillingen. Father Canisius hesitated to receive him into the Order, but advised him to continue his journey to Rome. The holy youth, again taking his staff in hand, arrived at Rome after a long and tedious journey. He made the whole distance, from Vienna to Rome, on foot, battling with innumerable difficulties. He afterwards said that he would have gone on to India, if no other means had been left him to attain his wish. At Rome, he knelt at the feet of St. Francis Borgia, who was at that time General of the So-

ciety of Jesus, and begged to be admitted among the novices. St. Francis, raising him from the ground, embraced him most kindly and gladly received him into the Order. The consolation which the holy youth felt in his inmost heart can hardly be expressed, and he began and continued his novitiate with the greatest zeal; so that even during the first few months, the master of novices hesitated not to point him out to the others as a model of virtue. Soon after his entrance, a violent letter arrived from his father, threatening him not only with his disfavor, but also with chains and a dungeon, if he did not immediately return to his home. But Stanislaus, weeping over the blindness of his father, became still more zealous in the exercise of virtues. He possessed very remarkable traits: whatever good he saw in others, he tried to imitate; his modesty was angelical, and his obedience, perfect. His love of mortification was almost exaggerated, and nothing but obedience could restrain him. He observed all the rules most carefully; gave due honor to his superiors, and treated his equals and inferiors with wonderful charity and humility. Among all his virtues the greatest was his love of God; hence proceeded his ecstasies, and the many tears in which he seemed to dissolve, when God was spoken of. His countenance glowed with love to the Almighty, and frequently beamed with divine radiance. The fervor of this divine love was so great, that, even in the depth of winter, he was forced to moderate it by pouring cold water on his breast. Nothing gave him greater delight than to hear God and the Blessed Virgin spoken of. All that he had read in praise of the Mother of our Lord, he gathered together, in order to be better able to extol and honor her. He never called her otherwise than his mother. One day, a priest asked him whether he loved Mary. "How can you ask me such a question?" replied the Saint, "She is my Mother!" Morning and night, he begged, on bended knees, the blessing of this his beloved Mother and her divine Son. He gave to prayer as much time as obedience permitted, and always with such deep reverence, that those who saw him loved to look on him. His desire to be united with his Beloved caused him continually to sigh and long for death.

On the 1st August, St. Lawrence was given him as patron for the month, and he celebrated the festival of this Saint with especial devotion. His ardent desire to behold the blessed Virgin on the coming feast of her Assumption caused him to write a letter, begging her to obtain for him this favor, and he obtained it. He placed the letter near his heart, receiving holy Communion, and towards evening, on the feast of St. Lawrence a slight fever seized him, which he regarded as a messenger of death, and

was happy at the thought of soon seeing God. When obliged to lie down, he made the sign of the holy Cross on himself and his bed, saying: "If it pleases the Lord that I should not again rise from this bed, His holy will be done." His sickness seemed not to be dangerous; but he said that he would die of it; and on the last day of his life, contrary to the opinion of his physicians, he said that he would not live to see the next morning. He received the holy Sacraments with such reverence and deep devotion, that all present were bathed in tears. The time that he still lived after this, he employed in pious exercises. He frequently kissed the crucifix with tender devotion, as also the picture of the Blessed Virgin, to whose protection he commended himself with filial confidence. He also invoked his holy patrons, whose names he desired to be read to him. On being asked whether he felt any anxiety of mind: "None at all," replied he: "my heart is ready, O God! my heart is ready!" Before his end, the Blessed Virgin, with a company of holy virgins and angels, appeared to invite him into heaven. Following this invitation, he expired, on the 15th day of August, more in consequence of his great love and desire to be with the Almighty, than from the violence of the fever. When he died, he held in one hand, a picture of the Blessed Virgin, and in the other, a burning taper; and his last words were the holy names of Jesus and Mary. The crucifix he had laid upon his breast, and had bound the rosary around his arm, to show that he desired to die in the love of the crucified Lord, and under the protection of the divine Mother. He had not yet reached his 18th year, and was in the tenth month of his novitiate. The innocence which he had received in baptism he carried unspotted to the grave. God made His servant glorious by many miracles, especially in Poland, where he is honored as patron Saint of the country. He appeared visibly to the troops, at the time of the war with the Turks, and obtained of the Almighty a glorious victory for them. By his intercession, many cities have escaped pestilence and conflagrations.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

Although the life of St. Stanislaus was short in years, it contains many wholesome instructions, and I will point out several of them to you.

I. The holy youth had such intense horror of all impure discourses, that he fainted on hearing them. What do you do when you hear such conversation? Are you

disgusted with them, and do you show that you are so; or do you perhaps only laugh at them? Ah! if you could only comprehend the horror such words are to the Almighty, it would be impossible for you to laugh. Pray that God would make you sensible of this.

II. Stanislaus imitated not the

example of the youths of his own rank and age, who lived too freely, although on account of it, he was laughed at, and even persecuted by his own brother. "I will live," said he, "in such a manner as I know to be agreeable to God; whether it is pleasing or not to my brother." It is nothing new that those who give themselves to the vanity of this world, should desire to draw others after them, and deride and persecute those on whom they cannot prevail to follow their example. A true Christian ought to imitate St. Stanislaus, and not allow himself to be deterred from walking in the path of right. He must live as he knows is pleasing in the sight of the Most High, whether it please men or not. If to please men, we neglect the service of God, and follow the example of frivolous worldlings; or if, not to displease men, we omit what is necessary for our salvation, we prove that we fear and love the Almighty less than men, which is not only great folly, but abominable wickedness. From whom can we expect more good and fear more evil, from God, or from men? See that you belong not to this class of people; but determine, like St. Stanislaus, to live so as to be agreeable to God. Be not disturbed by the derision and persecution of the wicked.

III. St. Stanislaus bore an especial devotion to our Lord in the most Holy Eucharist, and also toward the Blessed Virgin, whom he called his Mother. In recompense for this, he was twice miraculously fed by an Angel, and was visited by the divine Mother. Follow him in both points. Assist daily at Holy Mass, and always prepare yourself carefully for holy Communion; honor the divine Mother, and invoke her with filial trust. To ask her blessing, morning and night, after the example of St. Stanislaus,

is easily done, and is, moreover, a sign of love and confidence.

IV. At the very beginning of his sickness, St. Stanislaus showed himself ready to die, if it was the will of God. When he was asked during his sickness, whether he was anxious or troubled in mind, he replied: "Not at all; my heart is ready, O God! my heart is ready." Should God visit you with sickness, bow to the divine will, and show yourself ready to live or die according to God's pleasure; thus, you will not only be more quiet in mind, but you will also bear your sickness more patiently and with greater merit. In health, be careful that you suffer nothing to lie on your conscience, which, at the time of your death, may occasion you fear and anxiety; for, there is nothing more miserable than a man who on his death-bed has a troubled conscience. St. Stanislaus had neither fear nor anxiety, because he had never offended God by a mortal sin, but had always served Him faithfully. It is sin alone which frightens and troubles the dying. If on your sick-bed you would be free from all fear, do not commit sin, or if you have been guilty of it, repent. Delay not your penance until you are lying on your sick-bed: "For it is difficult, it is very difficult," says Hugo of St. Victor, "to do true penance at that time, and to awaken, in a troubled conscience, earnest repentance." Perhaps, at that moment, one does not even think of it, or knows not what to do in the anxiety of his mind. "At the time of sickness, you can hardly think of anything but what you feel," says St. Jerome; and St. Augustine writes: "It is in accordance with Divine Justice that he who forgets God during his life, forgets himself in the hour of death." Hence, he cannot earnestly endeavor to do what would ease his conscience, and prepare

him for a happy death. "Therefore, whoever wishes to die quietly and peacefully, let him do penance while he enjoys health," says St. Bernard. It is my advice, that, while you are in the possession of health, you would sometimes employ

a few minutes to examine your conscience, in order to ascertain if there is nothing which might trouble you on your death-bed. Should you find anything, remove it without delay.

FOURTEENTH DAY OF NOVEMBER.

ST. BRITIUS, BISHOP OF TOURS.

St Britius was, in his childhood, placed under the charge of the holy bishop Martin. Guided by so great a master, he made such rapid progress in virtue and learning, that St. Martin hesitated not to ordain him priest. Britius at first displayed an eminent zeal in his sacred calling; but in the course of time he became neglectful of his duties and unrestrained in his conduct and conversation. St. Martin omitted not to admonish him with fatherly kindness; but Britius heeded not the admonitions, and went at last so far, that he not only publicly blamed the actions of the bishop, but shamelessly derided and ridiculed him as an imbecile, and incited others against him. St. Martin treated him, nevertheless, with great gentleness, and offered many prayers to the Almighty for his conversion. One day, when Britius was standing in the street, a sick stranger came to him, and asked where he could find St. Martin. Britius, pointing to the holy man at some distance, said: "Are you looking for that fool? There he stands! See how he keeps his eyes fixed on heaven, as if he had lost his senses." St. Martin, who had heard him, said: "So, dear Britius, you speak of me as a fool to other people?" Britius was about to deny his own words, but St. Martin added: "I heard all you said. And yet I assure you, that God has heard my prayers. You will be my successor. Prepare yourself, however, in time; for the crosses you will have to bear will be very heavy." Britius, laughing immoderately at this, said: "Have I not spoken the truth in saying that you are a fool? What ridiculous ideas! I will now believe more than ever that your brain is disordered, and that you are filled with delusions." But notwithstanding the derision of Britius, the prophecy of the holy bishop was fulfilled. No sooner had St. Martin expired, than Britius, by especial Providence, was unani-

mously elected to succeed him. It was then that his eyes were suddenly opened; and weeping bitterly over his faults, and particularly over the wrong he had done to St. Martin, he tore himself away from all vanity and worldly pleasures, which until now had enchained him, chastised his body with penances, and occupied a great part of his time in prayer and devout reading; in one word, changed his entire life not only into that of a real Christian, but into that of a Saint.

For thirty-three years, he was left in peace; but then, the second part of St. Martin's prophecy was fulfilled. Trials and persecutions began to assail Britius. He was suspected and accused of the most wicked immorality, and his own subjects so far forgot themselves, as not only to insult him to his face, but even threatened to stone him to death. Britius, amazed at their accusations, testified to his innocence with an oath, and then left his justification in the hands of God. His confidence in the divine protection was rewarded by a miracle: a child, not one month old, publicly declared, in plain words, that the Bishop was innocent. The people were struck with awe at this miracle, and began to think better of their bishop. Being urged to discover the guilty, he said: "In so far as I am concerned, I am satisfied with what you have heard from the child's mouth; if you desire to know more, you must seek it yourself." The restless and embittered minds of the people were not yet satisfied, and ascribing the miracle to witchcraft, they intended to drive the bishop out of the city. Britius endeavored to prove his innocence by another miracle. He gathered live coals in his cloak, and carried them to the tomb of St. Martin. There depositing them, he said: "As truly as this garment has remained uninjured by the fire, so truly is my soul unstained by the crime of which I am accused." But neither could this miracle calm the rage of the people; the innocent bishop was banished and another elected in his place.

In this emergency, Britius, not knowing what to do, went to Rome. He related to the Pope the injustice done to him, but confessed, at the same time, that he regarded it as a just punishment for the wrong he had done to the holy bishop, St. Martin. The Pope ordered the Bishops of France to assemble in council and investigate the matter thoroughly. If they found Britius innocent, they were to restore him to his See. The holy Father's command was obeyed, and Britius was sent back to his flock, which he governed for seven years more. During this period, not one word of complaint for the wrong he had suffered ever passed his lips. He showed not the slightest hatred or dislike toward those who had so shamefully ill-treated him, as he looked upon what had occurred as a just retribution for his former sins. This

conduct caused his flock to love and revere him again as in former times : nay, they even received his instructions with greater willingness, followed his directions more obediently than ever, and thus gave great consolation to the holy man. On his part, he became more and more deeply interested in the welfare and salvation of his flock, and continued to have a father's care for them until his death, which took place in the 47th year of his episcopate. He repented continually of the faults which he had committed in his younger years, and endeavored to atone for them by penances and by patience in trials and persecutions. He often begged pardon of St. Martin for the dishonor with which he had treated him, invoked his intercession with great confidence, and always ascribed his conversion to the prayers of his holy teacher. St. Britius ended his penitent and holy life calmly, after having received the holy Sacraments.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Britius did very wrong in putting evil constructions upon the manners of St. Martin, and in despising and deriding him as a fool and a hypocrite. This fault he afterwards regretted ; and therefore suffered patiently the calumny and persecution with which God visited him, as a just retribution for his sins. You do very wrong in putting evil constructions on your neighbor's actions, and perhaps despising him in consequence ; for, I ask you firstly, in the words of the Apostle : " Who art thou that judgest another man's servant ? " (Rom. xiv.) Do you not know that such judgment belongs to the Almighty ? " But thou, why judgest thou thy brother ? or thou, why dost thou despise thy brother ? " (Rom. xiv.) Secondly : Are you quite sure that you know your neighbor's intention, or the motive that prompted him to act as he did ? " The heart is unsearchable," says God the Lord ; " who can know it ? " " I am the Lord," adds He, " that search the heart and prove the reins." (Jerem. xvii.) You may

easily be misled, by interpreting the actions of others after your own ideas. " But," you say, " what is to be done, if the actions are evidently evil ? " St. Bernard says : " Excuse the motives, if you cannot excuse the deed ; think that it is done out of ignorance, haste or inadvertence." All these give you no reason to despise your fallen brother ; he may rise again to-morrow : while you, standing to-day so high in your own estimation, may then be down as low as he. " If you saw your brother commit a wrong yesterday, you cannot be sure that to-day he is still a sinner, as you do not know whether he has not already reconciled the Lord by true penance," writes St. Ephrem. St. Bernardin says : " He whose wickedness made us almost despair of his salvation, suddenly becomes converted, while another, whom we believe pious and good, becomes wicked." Take this lesson to heart, and never interpret your neighbor's actions in an evil manner ; do not judge him rashly ; do not despise him on account of his faults. Repent after

the example of St. Britius, if you have sinned in this respect. Learn also of this Saint, that you must regard everything that you have to suffer on earth as a punishment for sin; and hence, bear it patiently. Some persons imagine that when they have confessed their sins, they need trouble themselves no further: and when God visits them with suffering, they think that they are unjustly treated, or have too much to bear. They ought rather to think of their sins, and regard their trials as a punishment. The true faith teaches that although, by confession, our sins are forgiven so far as their guilt and eternal punishment are concerned, yet there generally remains a temporal punishment which we have to undergo. Therefore those who have formerly sinned and who now suffer, should humbly think that this suffering is a part of their punishment; and they ought to bear it patiently, in the spirit of penance, and offer it to the Almighty.

II. After St. Britius had been restored to his See, he never complained of the wrong that had been done him; he showed no hatred or dislike towards those who had treated him so unkindly, but rather evinced, by his indefatigable zeal for the

salvation of their souls, a spirit of true Christian charity and forgiveness. How far are you from this manner of acting! It is true that you say: "I pardon my enemy; I will not revenge myself on him; I will neither hurt nor hate him?" But do you show that you bear no hatred or dislike towards him? Do you not frequently relate, without sufficient reason, what you have suffered from him? Are you not frequently unkind towards him and give him to understand that you do not forget the injury he has done you? Ah! that cannot be called pardoning from your heart; that is not loving your enemies as Christ has commanded. You desire that God should not remember your sins and misdeeds, and that He should be as merciful as if you had never committed any; why, then, do you not act in the same manner towards your enemies? "If you only abstain from hurting him who has hurt you, but turn from him and do not like to look at him; the wound without doubt remains in your heart. And this being the case, the command of Christ is not fulfilled. Do you desire that the Almighty should do the same? that He should not hurt you, but only turn from you?" Thus speaks St. Chrysostom.

FIFTEENTH DAY OF NOVEMBER.

ST. LEOPOLD, MARQUIS OF AUSTRIA.

St. Leopold, surnamed the Pious, was the sixth of the Marquises of Austria. Even in his childhood he gave evidence of his future holiness. Prayer and solitude were more beloved by him, than the plays and pastimes in which children usually rejoice. He never uttered an improper or frivolous word, and during his

whole life was remarkable for the modesty of his conversation. He fled the very shadow of sin, being instructed by his pious parents to fear God and shun all evil. This piety, which distinguished Leopold from his childhood to the end of his days, and which was not only observed at church, but at home, in all his actions, won for him the surname of "the Pious." Although educated amidst the dissipation and the temptations of a Court, and therefore continually in danger of sinning, he preserved his innocence unspotted.

After his father's death, he came to the head of the Government, and his administration was such as to give entire satisfaction to his subjects. Devotion to God he made the foundation of his reign, and hence he endeavored never to depart from the obedience which he owed to God and the holy Church. He had an appointed time for prayer and other devout exercises, and to these he attended before all other affairs. The difficulties which naturally beset a prince in his administration, he bore cheerfully; and giving every one free access to him, he patiently heard all complaints, earnestly endeavoring that all should receive justice without delay. Towards widows, orphans and the poor, he evinced a truly fatherly love and employed a large portion of his revenues in their maintenance. In one word, Leopold's government was such, that it might serve as a model to all princes. Agnes, the wife of our holy Marquis, was the daughter of the Emperor Henry IV., and was not less remarkable for piety and virtue than her husband. They lived together in undisturbed peace and fidelity. By the advice of Agnes, the Marquis resolved to build and endow a large church, in order that, as he expressed it in the Charter, the faithful and the clergy might there praise the Lord unceasingly, whilst he himself was prevented by his affairs from serving the Divine Majesty as assiduously as he desired. Before he had selected the spot where this church should be erected, he was, one day, standing at the window and speaking of his project, when a sudden gust of wind blew the veil from the head of the Marchioness, and carried it away. A few days later, while hunting, Leopold found this veil hanging on the branches of a tree. This circumstance determined his choice, and he gave immediate orders to build, on that spot, a magnificent temple in honor of the Blessed Virgin, to whom he had been deeply devoted ever since his childhood. As soon as the edifice was completed, he gave it to the regular Canons of St. Augustine, for whose dwelling, a noble monastery had been built near the church. Soon after, he founded another monastery in a lonely valley, about twelve miles from Vienna, for the Religious of St. Bernard. This house too was most

liberally endowed, so that its inmates might serve and praise the Lord, undisturbed by anxiety for their temporal wants. The large sum of money required for these Foundations was not regretted by the saintly Marquis, who trusted that the prayers of the pious monks, and the praises which were continually sent up from these churches to the Almighty, would draw the divine blessing upon his people, for the welfare of the whole land. For this reason also, he gave all possible assistance to the Priests, especially to those who were zealous in praising the Most High, and in laboring for the salvation of his subjects. He treated them with the utmost regard, and severely punished all those who wronged them, or who dared to oppose their holy endeavors.

The pious reign of St. Leopold lasted for forty years, during which time, none of his subjects expressed the slightest dissatisfaction. All rejoiced in being under so wise and virtuous a regent, and sincerely wished him a long life. The fame of his great and noble qualities spread also into other countries, and induced many princes and persons of high standing to go to Austria, in order to become acquainted with him and to profit by his example. After the lapse of forty years, the Almighty sent him a most painful malady; and it was truly edifying to see the heroic patience with which the holy man bore his sufferings, and how he encouraged himself by repeating the verses from Holy Writ, which he had learned in the days of his health. After devoutly receiving the holy Sacraments, he ended his virtuous and holy life, in the year 1136. His death was, as his life had been, peaceful and holy. How great his glory is in heaven, and how powerful his intercession, has been made known to the Christian world by many and great miracles. We will give only a few of the instances that are recorded.

A certain woman was threatened with imprisonment if she did not pay her debts. Unable to fulfil her obligation, she went to the tomb of the Saint, begging him, who during his life had been so kind to the poor, not to forsake her in her great need. During her prayer, it seemed to her that she distinctly heard the words: "Go home, search in your chest, and you will find a receipt for all your debts." Returning home joyfully, she opened her chest, and finding the receipt, she went to the creditors and requested the return of the bill of debt; they, however, told her that a stranger, clad in purple, had been there and having paid her debt had taken the bonds. This convinced the woman that St. Leopold had miraculously come to her aid.

A man who was imprisoned, with chains on his hands and feet, made a vow to St. Leopold, and was, in a miraculous

manner, released from prison. Being at liberty, he forgot his vow, and conducted himself as wickedly as ever. Before the end of the year, he was again cast into the same dungeon. He soon repented of his fault, renewed his promise, and invoked the Saint a second time. He was once more heard, and, by another miracle, saved from the prison, this time to lead a better life, after having given due thanks at the tomb of his holy intercessor.

Another man had lost his hearing. After vainly trying many remedies, he took refuge with the Saint, and promised to perform certain good works, if he was cured. His prayer was immediately heard; but he delayed, from day to day, the fulfilment of his promise, until, for his faithlessness, he again became deaf. Full of grief and confusion, he renewed his prayer and promise, and was cured a second time; and then, made wiser by experience, he hastened to fulfil his vow.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Leopold built churches and convents, placed devout men in them, and endowed them richly, that the inmates might be undisturbed and pray to God and praise Him. The treasure thus expended he deemed well laid out, as he believed that the prayers of pious religious, and the unceasing praise of the Almighty in the churches would draw the divine blessing upon his subjects. He also protected the priests, never allowed them to be disturbed in the administration of their functions, and always treated them with due reverence. Oh! how far are our times from imitating the example of St. Leopold! The people of these days consider as wasted whatever is given for the building of churches and convents and for the maintenance of the religious. They not only never think of founding churches and convents, or increasing the income of needy priests, but they even endeavor to annul the ancient donations, to decrease the income of the Church or to withdraw it entirely. They think that churches, convents and priests

do more harm to the people than good, and are a useless burden to the State. The clergy is oppressed instead of being protected; despised and slandered, instead of being treated with reverence. And why is this? We are told, no doubt, that it is all prompted by zeal for the benefit of the people. "How many hospitals, prisons, school-houses might be erected," our wise men tell us, "how many poor maintained, with the unnecessary and superfluous revenues of churches, convents and priests?" Thus they speak. To me, however, this zeal seems somewhat like the zeal of the traitor Judas, when he said: "Why was this waste of ointment made? For this ointment might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and the money given to the poor." (Mark, xiv.) How great a zeal for the poor! But under cover of this zeal, was hidden a despicable avarice. "He was a thief," says Holy Writ. (John, xii.) He thought not of the poor, but of his own purse. If the ointment or its value had fallen into

his hands, he would have had his part of it. When he saw that he would get none of it, he murmured against the waste of the precious spices. The reader will easily draw the inference. In regard to the number of priests and their revenues, which are generally much exaggerated, I ask, in my turn : "Why does the State need so many office-holders of all grades ? Could we not do with half, or less than half of them ? Would the world go to ruin without them ? And to what good are their large salaries ? Could they not live with less ? Or is their income used better than that of the clergy ?"

Of disrespect to priests, I have already spoken ; I add only one word more now ; I wish that all those of whom I have made mention, may be so fortunate as to have a pious priest at their side in their dying hour, to guide them happily into eternity. I admonish you, my reader, not to allow such people to lead you from the path of right. Rejoice at the sight of so many churches and convents erected in honor of God. Give thanks to the Almighty, for giving us pious priests and religious, who by their prayers and good deeds, praise the Almighty and draw the divine blessing on the whole land, as St. Leopold said.

II. St. Leopold was so careful in his speech, that an improper, or frivolous word never passed his lips. St. James says : "If any man offend not in word, the same is a

perfect man." (James, iii.) How is it with you ? Can it be said, with truth, that your lips never utter an improper word ? Ah ! think of your many lies and slanders, your invectives and curses. Remember the many indecent, impudent and lascivious speeches that you have made, as well in the presence of the young as on other occasions. You and those who listened to you may have deemed it jesting and pastime ; but what St. Chrysostom writes is doubtless true : "It is no pastime, no jest, but a vice extremely displeasing to the Most High." Oh ! how you will be frightened, in your last hour, by the recollections of such and other sinful speeches ; how strict will be your account at the Judgment-Seat of the Almighty, and how terrible the punishment which you will have to suffer in eternity, if you do not do penance, and if you are not in future more guarded in your expressions. "This, my impious tongue, will condemn me," cried a dying man, who had been indecent and shameless in his speech. Take heed that the same thing may not happen to you ! "Many have fallen by the edge of the sword, but not so many as have perished by their own tongue." (Eccl. xxxviii.) Repent when you have sinned, and correct your conduct ; endeavor to be chaste and pure in all your words. "He that keepeth his mouth and his tongue, keepeth his soul from distress," says the Holy Ghost. (Prov. xxi.)

SIXTEENTH DAY OF NOVEMBER.

ST. EDMUND, ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

The Kingdom of England, which centuries ago, gave so many Saints of both sexes to the Church and to heaven, was the native country of St. Edmund. His father's name was Reynold Rich, his mother's, Mabilia. Both led a pious life and endeavored to guide their son in the same path. Mabilia, especially, was anxious to inspire her child from his very infancy, with the love of God, abhorrence of sin, and the esteem of angelic purity. She also taught him early to fast on Fridays and to mortify his body in other ways. She afterwards sent him to Paris to study the liberal arts, but instructed him most carefully how to conduct himself, in order that he might not be seduced. As often as she sent him a supply of clothing, she added a hair-shirt, and exhorted him to make use of it sometimes that he might more securely guard his innocence. She also admonished him to avoid evil society, to pray and study, to hear frequently the word of God, and to commend himself to the protection of the Blessed Virgin. Edmund faithfully obeyed his mother's instructions, and hence, God bestowed especial graces upon him. One day, as he was walking with others, he left them, and began to read a devout book, because they had begun a rather unrestrained conversation. Whilst he was thus engaged, Christ appeared to him in the form of a lovely boy. Edmund was at first awed, as he did not know whence the boy had come, nor who he was; but our Lord said to him: "Edmund, do you not know me? I am daily with you at school; look at my forehead." Edmund looked up, and saw, on the Child's brow, the words: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." The divine Child then disappeared, but left an indescribable comfort in the heart of Edmund, who from that moment bore the most tender devotion to our Lord Jesus Christ. He also venerated daily the Blessed Virgin, and commended to her his chastity, which he had vowed to keep inviolate. He bought two rings on which the words, "Ave Maria," were engraved. One of these he placed upon the finger of an image of the Blessed Virgin, the other he wore himself, as

a sign that he was united with Mary and had chosen her as his spouse. Whenever he was tempted by an unchaste thought, he looked at the ring, remembered his promise, renewed it, and thus freed himself from the temptation. By the protection of the Blessed Virgin, by prayer and mortification, he preserved his innocence, although he was subjected to many dangers. One day, a wicked woman came into his room and endeavored to tempt him; but the chaste youth not only refused to listen to her, but seizing a scourge, he beat her so unmercifully, that she was glad to beat a hasty retreat.

While he was attending to his studies, at Paris, with great success, his pious mother became very sick and desired to see him. Obeying her call, he returned home to receive her last admonitions, and remained with her until her death, after which, returning to Paris, he completed his course with such distinction, that a professorship was offered to him. He accepted the offer and soon gained the love of his pupils, and the good-will of every one. Those of his pupils who were poor he assisted with alms, the sick he took into his house, and gave them a father's care; all received wholesome admonitions, and were led by him in the path of piety and virtue. Hence it happened that many of them went into monasteries in order the better to attend to their salvation. After some years, he resigned his professorship, became a priest, and preached the Gospel with great fruit, because he preached not only by word, but also by his works, and by the example of his holy life. God failed not to assist him by many miracles, of which we will relate only one.

One day, when he was preaching to a great number of people in the open air, the heavens were suddenly covered over with heavy black clouds, and the people, fearing that a thunderstorm was approaching, began to leave. The holy man perceived that Satan, by the permission of the Almighty, was the author of this; he commanded the people to remain, and then made the sign of the holy cross in the air, and behold! the clouds parted, and the sun shone brightly on the place occupied by the preacher and his audience, while all around them the ground was drenched with a violent shower.

After the Saint had passed several years in preaching, the See of Canterbury became vacant, and Edmund was forced to fill it. Invested with this high dignity, his conduct was such that it might serve as a most perfect model to all prelates. He sought not his own comfort or honor, but only the glory of God, the welfare of the Church, and the salvation of souls. He visited his whole diocese, preached and taught in all places, administered the holy sacraments, encouraged sinners to repentance, aided

the poor and orphans, and never received any present, but employed the greater part of his own income in relieving the distressed. God, however, desired to prove His faithful servant by adversity. The Saint, in accordance with his duty, not only defended the rights and privileges of the Church, but also reformed the vices of both common people and persons of the highest social position, with undaunted courage. For this he fell into disgrace with the king, and was slandered and persecuted in various ways. Edmund bore it all with the greatest patience, encouraged himself to endurance, and said to those who pitied him: "The wrongs that I suffer are bitter but wholesome medicine; they tend to the salvation of my soul." He never showed the slightest resentment against his enemies, but, loving them with his whole heart, he said: "Were they to tear out my eyes, I would still love them." But seeing that he could no longer administer his functions in a manner befitting his dignity, he left England and went to France. During the night preceding his embarkation, Edmund was visited, in a vision, by St. Thomas, who had occupied the same episcopal chair and who had sacrificed his life in defence of the rights of the Church. He consoled the Saint, and assured him of a speedy reward for his labor. Arrived in France, St. Edmund took refuge in the same monastery in which St. Thomas, for the same cause, had sought an asylum. But soon after his arrival, he was visited by a malady, for the cure of which the physicians advised him to go to another abbey for a change of air. The religious, who had just welcomed him, were very sad to part with him so soon; but the holy bishop told them, that he would return on the festival of the King and Martyr, St. Edmund. And this really happened, but not in the manner which the religious expected; for, no sooner had the bishop entered the other monastery, than his sickness increased to such a degree, that he himself desired to receive the last Sacraments. When the Blessed Eucharist was brought into his room, the Saint, stretching out both arms towards the same, exclaimed in a clear voice: "Thou art witness, O my Lord, that I have never sought anything else in this world, but Thee alone! do now with me according to Thy holy will." Having received the Holy Sacraments, he tenderly embraced the Crucifix, and bedewed it with many tears; kissing the holy wounds and pressing the sacred image to his heart, he said: "You will now soon joyfully draw water from the fountains of the Saviour." The remaining time he passed in pious contemplations, and, finally, ended his holy life by the precious death of a Saint, in the year of our Lord, 1241. His holy remains were brought, on the

festival of St. Edmund, King and Martyr, to the monastery to which he had gone, when first he arrived in France, and thus his prophecy was fulfilled. He was buried with great honors and God made his tomb glorious by many miracles.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Edmund was exhorted by his mother, to shun all bad company; and, to his own great benefit, he obeyed her. Hence, one day, when he left such companions, he had the happiness of seeing the Lord in human form and of speaking to Him. Not only in youth, but in riper years too, all who would save their souls must shun dangerous company, and not be on friendly terms with those who speak indecently or lead a godless life; for, the evil that proceeds from such association can hardly be estimated. How many virtuous persons have been misled by wicked companions and have been slowly ruined by them! "For, such is human nature," says St. Chrysostom, "that when a pious person associates with a wicked one, the latter is not reformed by the former, but the pious is corrupted by the wicked," St. Bernard hesitates not to say, that the devil, by the aid of such company, works much evil which by himself he cannot do. The experience of every day convinces us of the truth of this assertion. Many who had overcome all the temptations of Satan, have fallen into sin through the promises, flatteries and incitements of one bad friend, and have thus been precipitated into the depth of hell. If you desire to live piously, shun bad people more than Satan himself.

II. Through the protection of the Blessed Virgin, through prayer and penance, St. Edmund preserved his chastity and innocence. The same we

read in the lives of many other Saints. Make use of these means if you wish to live chaste and pure. "Oh! all you who desire to live in virginal chastity," says St. Chrysostom, "fly for refuge to the divine Mother, for she will preserve inviolate the beautiful, precious and immortal treasure." Thus also the holy Fathers admonish us to pray and to mortify our body; otherwise no one can long preserve his innocence. If you, however, have lost this precious treasure, by one or more mortal sins, then you must know that penance is the only remedy left to you. The above mentioned means may, however, serve to prevent you from falling into sin again. Endeavor to obtain the powerful protection of Mary; pray fervently and frequently; be not too lenient to your body, but chastise it by works of penance. Should you after all, either out of weakness or wickedness, commit a mortal sin, I exhort you not to remain long in it, but cleanse yourself, as soon as possible, by a contrite confession. If you defer, the sin takes deep root or draws other sins after it. "Therefore," says St. Chrysostom, "if your soul is dead in sin, endeavor to raise it immediately to a new life." In conclusion, consider the beautiful words of St. Edmund: "The wrongs which I suffer are a bitter but a wholesome medicine; they conduce to the salvation of my soul." Just so should you think of all your trials and persecutions. They are bitter, but serve to se-

cure your salvation if you endeavor to suffer them in the same spirit as St. Edmund did. Follow his example in this, as in all other points, that you may hope for a death as bright and happy as his. "Thou

art my witness, O Lord! that I have sought nothing but Thee." Thus spoke the Saint on his death-bed. Whoever can say this, will surely die cheerfully and happily.

SEVENTEENTH DAY OF NOVEMBER.

ST. GREGORY, THAUMATURGUS; AND ST. GERTRUDE, VIRGIN.

St. Gregory, bishop of Neo-Cæsarea in Pontus, was born in that city, of rich but heathen parents. He is called Thaumaturgus, or Worker of Wonders, on account of the many and great miracles which he wrought during his life. He was naturally inclined to be good, and was filled with an intense desire to gain knowledge; therefore, on coming to riper years, he went to Cæsarea in Palestine, and thence to Alexandria, to study the liberal arts. The reading of heathen books disgusted him with paganism; for he learned by it how weak and unstable its doctrines are; and at the same time, becoming acquainted with the true faith by reading some Christian books, he began highly to esteem Christianity. He led a blameless life and especially abhorred the vice of unchastity, so general among the heathens. This displeased some of his fellow-students, and they persuaded a wicked woman, to ask him, in the presence of many others, the money that he had promised her. This was done at the moment when Gregory, in the presence of a great crowd of people, was disputing on some subject with some other learned men. All were startled at the woman's words, as they had never heard anything wrong of Gregory. The latter best knew his own innocence, but would neither talk to the woman, nor allow himself to be disturbed in his disputation. He quietly requested one of his friends to give her as much money as she demanded; but she had hardly got it, when the Evil One took possession of her, and tormented her so that she howled terribly, made a public confession of her wickedness and begged Gregory's pardon. The young man, although he had not received holy baptism, called with confidence on the God of the Christians and relieved the possessed. Thus did the Almighty save Gregory, and bring the wickedness of his enemies to shame. This incited him anew

not to delay any longer to embrace Christianity. After he had been baptized, he endeavored to live in accordance with the promises he had made, and to conform his actions entirely to the maxims of the Christian faith. He continued his studies for several years, and then returned to his home, where he passed his time in solitude, prayer and meditation. To those who visited him he spoke rarely of other things than the blindness of idolatry, the truth of the Christian faith, the beauty of virtue, and the horror of vice, which caused him to be highly esteemed by the inhabitants of the city, although most of them were heathens. Phædimus, bishop of Amasea, informed of this, resolved to consecrate Gregory bishop of Neo-Cæsarea. The humble servant of the Lord endeavored to avoid this honor by flight; but Phædimus was firm in his resolution and declared Gregory, in the presence of all the people, bishop of the city, and thus silenced all further objections. At that time, there were only seventeen Christians in the city and all the other inhabitants were idolaters. Before the new bishop commenced his functions, he retired for several days into solitude, where he prayed to God to bestow upon him, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, the grace to lead his small flock in the right path, and to increase its small number by converting the heathen. During his prayers the Virgin Mother appeared to him, in the night, accompanied by St. John, whom she commanded to instruct Gregory, how to conduct himself and to teach others. Having received these instructions, St. Gregory left his solitude, comforted and strengthened, and began to labor for the conversion of the heathens. The miracles he wrought had the happiest results. Before he entered the city, he was obliged to take shelter, with his companion, in the most celebrated heathen temple, where Satan, speaking through the idols, answered various questions. Gregory passed the whole night in prayer, and, making the sign of the cross over the whole building, he drove Satan away. When the chief of the idolatrous priests came, on the following day, with his sacrifice, he heard before the temple a terrible howling of the devils, who lamented that, driven away by Gregory, they could not return into their old dwelling. The heathens ran after the bishop and complained of what he had done. Gregory improved the opportunity, to explain to them the power of the Christian God, in whose name he had driven away Satan and his legions, but could also force him to return. Of this the heathen priest desired a proof. Gregory wrote on the tablet the word "Enter," gave it to the idolatrous priest, and told him to lay it on the Altar, and then, he added, the devils will be obliged

to return to the temple, in the name of Jesus. The heathen did as he was told, and as all happened as the bishop had said, he recognized the power of the Christian God, was converted with his wife and children, and received holy baptism. This first conversion was daily followed by others. As the number of the Christians greatly increased in this manner, the Saint resolved to build a church. The place was selected, but a high mountain prevented him from giving the building the dimensions he desired. In this emergency, the bishop had recourse to prayer, and the mountain, by the power of God, retired, in the presence of a multitude of heathens and Christians, as far back as was needed. This and many other miracles which the Saint almost daily wrought, had such influence over the minds of the pagans, that they came in crowds to be baptized, and in all their troubles they asked his advice. The river Lycus, which flowed by the city, was frequently so swollen, that the surrounding fields were overflowed, with great damage. Some of the sufferers came and asked the bishop to help them. Going with them, he first prayed; then he stuck his staff into the ground near the bank of the river. The staff took root immediately, and since that time, the river has never overstepped the place thus marked. Two brothers quarrelled on account of a pond abounding in fishes. Each desired to be the possessor of it, and they became so embittered, that they intended to kill each other. Gregory succeeded several times in calming them, but on seeing that this never lasted long, he prayed to God to end the contention, and in the same night, the whole pond so thoroughly dried up, that neither water nor fishes were to be seen. In this manner, peace was restored between the brothers. How highly the Saint was esteemed for these and other miracles can easily be supposed, although he endeavored to decline all honors, by ascribing his wonders to a holy relic which he always carried with him. But the more he fled from human praise, the more was he venerated and loved. Still there were some who disliked him and who even dared to mock him. Among these were two Jews, one of whom, pretending to be dead, laid himself down in a place where the Saint was to pass. The other remained standing there also, and when Gregory came, he began to weep and lament for his dear dead friend, begging the Saint to give him an alms to enable him to bury him. The intention of these deceivers was to deride the bishop on account of his miracles, and to make others laugh at him. Gregory, who had no money with him, gave the man his cloak and went on. Rejoiced at having thus deceived the Saint, the man called his pretended

dead companion, telling him to rise; but found, to his horror, that the man was really dead. Many volumes would hardly suffice to contain all the miracles wrought by the holy man on the possessed and the sick, and to recount the labors he undertook to propagate the true faith. After a long, well spent and holy life, he felt, at last, that his end was approaching, and visiting once more his whole diocese, he redoubled his zeal in instructing his flock, admonished all to constancy, and endeavored to practise more good works than ever before. Soon after, he fell sick, and ended his days by a happy death. Shortly before closing his eyes, he asked if there were yet some in the city who had not received holy baptism. "Seventeen," was the answer. The Saint, already in his agony, raised his eyes to heaven and said: "Thanks and praise to God! When I took possession of my See, I found only seventeen Christians. May God preserve all in the true faith, and give to all infidels, in the whole world, the light of the Saviour's divine Word!" The death of St. Gregory took place in the seventieth year of his age, and the 270th of the Christian Era.



The Roman Martyrology commemorates, also to-day, the virgin St. Gertrude, who is to be distinguished from another virgin of the same name, whose life is recorded in the month of March. The Breviary relates of her, as follows: Gertrude was born at Eisleben, in Saxony, the same place where, two hundred years later, the unhappy Luther came into the world. When hardly five years old, she went into the Benedictine convent at Rudersdorf, to consecrate herself entirely to the service of the Most High. From that time, she despised all that was worldly, and striving only after virtue, led an almost heavenly life. The meditation of the divine mysteries, to which she was much devoted, served her as an incitement to virtue and perfection. In all her actions, she sought only the honor of God. Her conversations on our Lord and His holy life were most edifying, and her devotion to the Holy Eucharist, and the bitter passion and death of Christ was so fervent, that she frequently shed floods of tears in contemplating them. The Virgin Mother, whom in a vision, Christ had given her as mother, she venerated with filial affection. She daily offered all her prayers and other good works for the souls in purgatory, many of whom she freed from their sufferings.

When thirty years of age, she was chosen abbess or superior, and successively governed two convents, with so much

mildness, wisdom and zeal for the maintenance of the Rule, that the houses under her charge were justly regarded and praised as true dwellings of religious perfection. Although the holy virgin, as superior, stood above all, she would be the least of them, and endeavored to show those under her all possible kindness. The Almighty favored her with extraordinary gifts. She had many visions of Christ, the Blessed Virgin and other Saints. The revelations which she had of secret and future events were almost numberless. She often went into ecstasy during her prayers and continued in it a considerable length of time. But notwithstanding these and other divine gifts, she was so humble that she frequently said that one of the greatest miracles of divine goodness was the fact that God suffered her to serve Him. Quite different was the judgment of heaven; for, to say nothing of many other proofs of the favor with which she was regarded, we will only relate, that Christ Himself revealed to another holy person, that He had chosen for Himself a most lovely dwelling in the heart of Gertrude. God made the hour of her death known to her; and the nearer it approached, the more her zeal in the Lord's service increased; until a happy death called her home, in 1292. She was during her life, venerated as an example of all virtues, among which her love of God was the brightest. This love was so great, that her death was caused rather by its ardor than by the sufferings of her malady. Before and after her death, God wrought many and great miracles by her intercession.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Gregory took especial care to keep the promise he had made when receiving holy baptism. In baptism, we renounce Satan and all his works, and make an alliance with God, by the promise that we will serve Him and keep His commandments. This alliance we break as often as we commit a mortal sin. How is it with you? Have you kept your promise? May not the words of St. Bernard be applied to you? "You have renounced the devil and yet you serve him. You have renounced his works, and yet strive only after that which is evil." You have promised to serve God alone and to keep His commandments; and yet you do in everything the contrary. Ah! be ashamed before your God and weep bitter tears for your perjury. Renew your baptismal vows and be in future true to them. "When the priest asked you: do you renounce the devil and all his works, what was your answer? I renounce them. Remember these words and let them never part from your memory," says St. Ambrose.

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I will take this occasion to give you another instruction. Many who are not Catholics refuse to be converted, because they are told that they must not break their baptismal vows. But they ought to know that they do not break them by becoming Catholics; for, by their baptism they made an alliance with the true Christ and the true Church. This true Church is the Catholic Church only; hence by becoming Catholics, they only fulfil the vow they made. They broke it when, after coming to the use of reason, they gave their free consent to a false religion, and thus fell into heresy. By turning from this error and becoming Catholics, they renew their first alliance with the true Church of Christ, and thus fulfil the first promise made for them when they were baptized.

II. The nearer the hour of her death approached the more zealous St. Gertrude became in the service of God. The same was the case with Saint Gregory. He redoubled his fatherly care for his flock and for the salvation of his own soul. Both acted rightly. Many persons are aware when their lives are drawing to a close, either because they are very old, or because they perceive that their strength leaves them, or because God visits them with a mortal sickness. If these persons wish to act sensibly they will endeavor to employ the time left to them to the best advantage. They ought to prepare themselves carefully and in time for death; bear the pains they suffer patiently, in the spirit of penance, and offer them to the Almighty; practise good works daily; repent daily and hourly of the sins of their past life, in order to atone, at least in some measure, for their former negligence, and yet gather some treasures for eternity, during the few days of life that still remain.

"Work while it is day," admonishes the Lord; "the night cometh when no man can work." (John ix.). The laborers in the gospel who did not begin to work until the eleventh hour, received the same wages as those who had worked longer, because in their zeal they had done as much in the last hour, as the others during the whole day. St. Chrysostom says: "At the eleventh hour are called those who are advanced in age. This parable is intended to encourage those who do not reform until they are old, that they may not think that their happiness in heaven will not be as great as that of others." But Christ gave this parable to comfort not only the aged, but all those who have been negligent in the service of the Most High. Such people especially when they feel that their end draws near, should employ all their strength to serve the Lord, in order to repair, in a short time, what they have neglected. They will surely gain eternal life by acting thus. St. Chrysostom says: "The older we are or the nearer we are, for other reasons, to eternity, the more eagerly must we run along the way to Heaven."

The special devotion of St. Gertrude to the passion and death of our Lord, prompts me to say a few words more. Harder than a stone must you be, if, considering not only who He was who suffered and died for your sake, but also, how He suffered in soul and body and how painful a death He died—harder than a stone, I say, must you be, if, considering all this, you are not moved with love and devotion towards your Saviour. But you must prove your gratitude and love, especially, by earnestly repenting of your sins, which were the cause of Christ's sufferings and death. "He was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins," says the

Prophet. (Isai. liii.) "See, O man!" says St. Bernard, "the greatness of your wounds, in the awful suffering of the Lord." And if you recognize the enormity of sin, tell me, how can you dare to sin again? "The son of God died for our sins;" says Origen: "and canst thou, O Christian, delight in sinning?" You know that Christ, true God and Man, sweat blood for your crimes, in the garden of Olives; that He was made a prisoner, was derided, scourged,

crowned with thorns, and finally crucified; and you dare to sin anew? Is then hell itself enough to punish such abominable wickedness? The holy Apostle curses all those who do not love our Lord Jesus Christ. What then does he deserve who even dares to offend Him anew? "If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." (1 Cor. xvi.)

EIGHTEENTH DAY OF NOVEMBER.

ST. EMERIC, CONFESSOR: AND ST. WINEFRIDA, VIRGIN.

The festival of St. Emeric is celebrated on the fourth day of this month. But as we related, on that day, the life of St. Charles Borromeo, we will give that of St. Emeric to-day.

St. Emeric was a son of St. Stephen, King of Hungary. He was so devoted to prayer, that, from his early youth, he would rise from his bed, during night, and pass many hours in devotional exercises. He especially loved to repeat the Psalms, each of which he ended with an act of contrition. Stephen, his holy father, was greatly comforted by this, and left nothing undone to increase his son's piety and virtue. The holy prince arrived at manhood without losing his early fervor; he frequently visited the Churches, and edified every one by his piety. One day, accompanied by one of his servants, he visited the church of St. Gregory, at Vesprim, and while there, thought what sacrifice he could offer to the Almighty that would be most agreeable. Suddenly, the Church was illuminated by a heavenly light, and he heard a voice from above, saying: "Consecrate the purity of your soul and body to the Lord, and preserve it until your end." Emeric rejoiced greatly at hearing these words, and immediately obeyed them, by making to God a vow of perpetual chastity.

Meanwhile, his holy father, who knew nothing of this, had anxiously sought a virtuous spouse for his only son, and now desired that Emeric should marry her. The prince had not the courage to reveal his vow to his father, much less to refuse the

proposed marriage. Hence, trusting in God, he allowed the ceremonies to take place, but then made known his vow to his royal bride, and represented to her so clearly the value of angelical purity, that she willingly bound herself by the same vow. The chaste prince, however, neglected not to beg of God, by fervent prayer, and constant chastisement of his body the grace of being ever faithful to his promise, against all the temptations of Satan. He kept it inviolate, and lived like a Saint. God, not willing that such virtue should remain long unrewarded, called him from this world by an early death. St. Emeric fell sick and prepared himself joyfully for departure. At the moment of his death, the Archbishop who assisted him, saw the soul of the holy prince ascend to heaven, accompanied by angels, whom he had endeavored to imitate in chastity. He was buried in Stuhlweissenburg; and God bestowed great favors upon those who, in their need, went to the tomb of the Saint for relief.



We will place beside the chaste and holy prince Emeric, a virgin named Winefrida, not less virtuous than he. She was born in England, of pious and wealthy parents. Her father, Tevith, gave her in charge of Beuno, a saintly priest, who left nothing undone, to lead his pupil in the path of righteousness. Winefrida soon imbibed an aversion for all that is temporal and perishable, and resolved to consecrate her virginity to the Almighty. Her pious parents, without whose knowledge she would not do any thing, gladly gave their consent, and Winefrida made her vow with a cheerful heart, and after it, endeavored to lead a holy life in retirement from the world.

Cradoc, the son of a neighboring prince, desired her hand in marriage; and ceased not to annoy her with his importunities even after he had become acquainted with her vow. He sought opportunity to speak to her alone, and to make her yield to his wishes. Hearing, one day, that her parents had left her alone at home, whilst they were at church, he hastened, with some of his domestics, to her house, determined either to gain her consent, or carry her off by violence. Unannounced, he entered her apartment, and, representing to her the object of his coming, told her how happy she could make his life by accepting his offer. The chaste virgin, in her fear and trepidation, knew not how to escape from the prince. At last, under the pretext of going into an adjoining room to prepare for her journey, she fled from the house, toward the church. Cradoc, seeing her leave the house, drew his sword, and hastening after her, overtook her near the

church, and full of rage, he said to her: "How dare you insult me thus? Either consent to my wishes, or instantly die!" Winefrida, strengthened by the Almighty, answered fearlessly: "I am the spouse of the eternal King. To Him I have given my love and cannot give it to another. Neither your promises nor your threats can make me faithless to Him." The wicked prince, enraged at her words, severed her head from her body at one stroke, and spurning it with his foot, remained standing on the spot where he had committed the murder, as though he had done a heroic deed. He imagined that, being a royal prince, he had no one to fear. But when St. Beuno, the pious priest, was informed of what had taken place, he hastened to the scene, and taking the head of the virgin in his hand, he addressed the murderer: "Thou godless man, what hast thou done? Behold! as I, a weak man, cannot oppose thy power, I will call upon heaven to requite thee according to thy desert!" Scarcely had these words been spoken, when Cradoc fell dead, without having given one sign of repentance. Beuno kissing the holy head of Winefrida, laid it, by divine inspiration, on the dead body, and then preached a powerful sermon to the people on the horrible vice of unchastity. This being ended, he exhorted his hearers to pray to God that He would restore to life the chaste Christian heroine. And behold! during this prayer life returned to the dead body of the virgin, and the people, breathless with astonishment, saw her rise. On her neck, where the head had been severed from her body, was a red mark, which time did not efface, as a sign of the miracle. She lived many years after and became Abbess of a Convent, in which she ended her life, with the fame of great holiness. On the spot where she received her death-stroke, arose a spring called Holy-Well, the water of which has cured many invalids.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Emeric, a royal prince, lived in chastity, and persuaded his bride to lead the same life which he had vowed to the Lord. He died joyfully, and was carried by the Angels into heaven. Cradoc, also a royal prince, becomes a slave to lust, tempts the chaste Winefrida to sin, dies a sudden death, and descends into hell. See how unlike is the end of the chaste to that of the unchaste. Like which of these princes would you rather

die? Without doubt, like the chaste Emeric. If this is your earnest wish, then abstain from living like the unchaste Cradoc. Avoid the vice to which he was addicted, and dare not tempt others to it. The same God is still alive, who in the Old Testament allowed the debauched prince Zambri to be killed in his sin, and who punished Cradoc by a sudden death. He is able to punish you in a similar manner. Fear Him, and if you fear Him

truly, do not offend Him as Zambri and Cradoc did. Endeavor to live chastely in your station, after the example of St. Emeric, and to this end, use the same means which this holy prince employed.

II. St. Winefrida proved by deeds that she feared to sin against chastity, more than she feared death; for she consented not, although Cradoc endeavored to force her, sword in hand. She was resolved rather to die than to offend the Almighty. What this holy virgin did, you and every one else are obliged to do; because it is your duty to love God above everything, and, therefore, more than your life. What have you done until now? You have never been threatened

with death; and yet how often you have sinned! Repent of your misdeeds, and resolve rather to suffer death than to sin against that purity to which you are obliged by your station in life. Believe, without any doubt, that sin is a much greater evil than death; and does not reason teach us, that of two evils we should avoid the greater? To consider the matter rightly, death is in itself no evil: sin is the only true evil of mankind. "Sin alone," says St. Rupert, "is truly an evil, as nothing but sin can hurt man." And St. Chrysostom says: "The only real evil on earth is sin." Hence this Saint used to say: "I fear nothing but sin."

NINETEENTH DAY OF NOVEMBER.

ST. ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY, LANDGRAVINE OF HESSE AND THURINGIA.

St. Elizabeth, a model of devotion and purity to those who live singly, a mirror of love and retirement for married people, a most perfect example of patience for widows, and whose virtues deserve to be followed by all, high and low, was born in Hungary. She was a daughter of Andrew II., King of Hungary, and of Gertrude, daughter of the Duke of Carinthia. According to the Roman Breviary, Elizabeth began in early childhood to fear God, and increased in piety with age. The walk she loved best of all was going to church, where she prayed with angelic devotion, and whence it was a difficult task to bring her home, as her greatest delight consisted in praying. At the door of the church, she always took off the jewelled coronet which she wore, and when asked why she did this, she replied: "God forbid that I should ever appear with such a crown before the face of Him who was crowned with thorns, and who, out of love for me, was nailed to the cross." She called Mary, the divine Mother, her mother, and entertained great devotion towards St. John, the Apostle and Evangelist, whom she chose as the special pro-

tector of her chastity. She never refused what was asked of her in the name of the Blessed Virgin or in that of St. John. The money allotted to her for her recreation, she gave to the poor, requesting them to say the Ave Maria. She was an enemy to luxury, vain adornments and idleness. Nature had not only bestowed upon her unusual personal beauty, but had also endowed her with great qualities of mind.

In obedience to her parents, she gave her hand to Louis, Landgrave of Hesse and Thuringia, and lived with him in continual harmony, her conduct being as blameless in the married state as it had been during her maidenhood. She gave one hour every night to prayer, and spent the day in attendance at the divine service in the church, in devout reading and in working for the poor. She always treated her husband with love and respect, and was a model of all virtues to her subjects. She watched over her domestics with a most careful eye, in order that they might lead a Christian life; but took always a mother's interest in seeing that their wages were punctually paid. She herself carried to the church the princes and princesses to whom she gave birth; and it was her custom, on these occasions to lay a rich offering on the Altar, and to give abundant alms to the poor. Under her royal robes, she continually wore a garment of hair-cloth. For the sick and the forsaken she had more than a mother's care and solicitude. She erected a hospital in which she nursed the sick and sheltered orphans; besides feeding nine hundred poor people, every day, at the palace, and sending alms to the dwellings of those who were ashamed to beg. She also visited the sick in their houses, and served them most tenderly even when they were leprous. She kissed their hands and feet, and encouraged them to patience. Never did a poor person leave her without receiving alms, and more than once, when she had no money with her, she gave away the veil from her head. She did not hesitate even to mend the clothes of the needy, and during a severe famine, gave all her corn to the sufferers. In one word, she did not neglect anything that Christian charity could do; so that she was universally called the mother of the poor.

There were at court many who, on account of her great charity, laughed at and derided her; some even accused her of extravagance. Elizabeth, however, did not allow herself to be diverted from her deeds of kindness, and the Landgrave dismissed her accusers with indignation, probably because he perceived that the more charitable his spouse was, the more he was blessed with temporal goods. Hence he not only abstained from disturbing her in her kind deeds, but assisted her in them as long

as he lived. He ended his life in a crusade, in which he joined with several other Christian princes in order to conquer the Holy Land from the infidels. Elizabeth grieved deeply when the news of his death reached her, but submitted to the will of the Almighty, saying: "It is known to Thee, O my God, that I loved no one on this earth more than my husband; not only because he was my husband, but also because he loved Thee with his whole heart. But as it has pleased Thee to call him, I am well contented with Thy holy will; and if I could, against Thy decree, raise him from the dead by reciting one Pater Noster, I would not do it. I only beg of Thee to give him eternal peace, and bestow upon me the grace to serve Thee faithfully until the end of my days." After this heroic submission to the will of God, she caused many masses and prayers to be said for the deceased, gave large alms to the poor, divested herself of her royal robes, and, though but twenty years old, she vowed to live in chaste widowhood for the rest of her days. It pleased the Almighty to try His zealous handmaid most painfully. The nobility made the brother of the deceased Landgrave regent, and accused the holy princess of having impoverished the state by her charity to the poor. Under this pretext, they deprived her of all her possessions, and banished her from the Court, with three children, a son and two daughters. Her former vassals, fearing to draw upon themselves the disfavor of the new government, durst not give her lodgings. Even the hospitals, which she herself had founded, were closed against her. Hence she had to lodge mostly in a stable and to live on the bread she begged. In such unexpected and more than painful circumstances, St. Elizabeth showed a truly heroic, and, to the children of the world, incomprehensible strength and patience. She complained to no one of the injustice of the nobility, not even to her royal father, who was still living; but rejoiced that she could suffer for the love of God. After the first night of her banishment, she went to the Church of the Franciscans and requested them to sing the "Te Deum," or "Great God! we praise thee," to give thanks to God for the sorrows with which He had visited her. The wrongs and outrages which the holy princess suffered, besides her banishment, can hardly be described. An old woman, who had formerly received clothing and nourishment from St. Elizabeth, dared to push her into a pool of stagnant water, in the street, abusing her at the same time most shamefully, for not having immediately made way for her. This outrage aroused not in the least the wrath of the holy princess; she quietly raised herself out of the pool, cleansed her garments, and offered herself to the Almighty for more suffering. God did not fail to

comfort His handmaid in her adversity. Christ appeared to her, during her prayers, encouraged her, and promised never to abandon her. After some time, through her father's influence, a dwelling, suitable to her rank, was conceded to her, and her dowry was refunded. The Saint immediately used one part of the building for a hospital, made her home in the same, and nursed the sick, as if she had been a servant, hired to wait upon them. All her spare time was employed in prayer and other devout exercises. She also chastised her body by fasting and other penances. At the age of twenty-four years, she learned by revelation, that her end was approaching, for which she prepared herself by most devoutly receiving the holy sacraments. She exhorted all those who were around her death-bed, to love God with their whole heart and to assist the poor to the best of their ability. After this, she continued in prayer, until her soul, richly adorned with virtues and merits, went to her Creator, in the year of Our Lord 1231. The funeral took place at Marburg, in Hesse, where her holy remains still rest, honored not only by Catholics, but also by many Protestants. Luther himself, though a declared enemy of the Saints, believed our Elizabeth to have been one, and called her so, thereby acknowledging that one can be saved and become a saint in the Catholic faith. The miracles that have taken place at the shrine of the holy princess, have made her celebrated throughout the whole world. Sixteen dead persons are known to have been restored to life, through her intercessions, and the number of the sick, who were restored to health, is incomparably greater.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. The life of St. Elizabeth may serve as a model to persons of every age and station. Children may learn to fear God from their earliest years, and to increase their devotion with their age ; single persons, how to live chastely in their state ; married people, how husband and wife ought to live together ; and the widowed how to sanctify their solitude. Masters and mistresses may learn how to take care of their domestics, and pay their wages regularly. Those of a higher station may learn to set</p>	<p>a good example to others, and not to be ashamed to appear at public worship. All Christians can find instruction in it, for employing their time well, helping the needy, and bearing crosses and trials sent by heaven. God permitted a Landgravine, a royal princess, to be banished unjustly from court, to beg her bread, and, besides other ignominies, to be refused a shelter among her own subjects. Still she complained not ; but, submissive to the decrees of Providence, gave humble thanks to</p>
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the Almighty for all that He, in His wisdom, had sent her. Even at the death of her husband, what fortitude, what submission to the divine will she manifested! Oh! that all would endeavor, in trials of much less severity, to unite their will with that of God, and patiently bear the cross that He has laid upon them.

II. The favorite walk of St. Elizabeth, when she was still a child, was to go to church, where she manifested most angelic devotion, and was so happy, that she could hardly be persuaded to leave. What is your favorite walk? Where do you like to remain? And when you do go to church, why are you in such haste to leave it again? Why do you much oftener go to theatres, frivo-

lous societies, vain amusements, bar-rooms and ball-rooms, than to Church, to prayers, to sermons, or to public worship? Why does the sermon, the mass, or conversation with God in prayer so soon become wearisome to you, when many hours, nay, even half the day or night seem not long, when you occupy them in gaming, dancing, or silly conversation? Answer these questions if you can; and then tell me, do you expect to justify yourself before God, and to enter the same heaven into which St. Elizabeth entered? "Ah! truly, heaven becomes not the dwelling of those who sleep and are idle, but of those who earnestly endeavor to gain it." Thus speaks the holy pope, St. Leo.

TWENTIETH DAY OF NOVEMBER.

ST. FELIX OF VALOIS, AND ST. COLUMBAN, ABBOT.

St. Felix, of the royal house of Valois, was born in France, in 1127, and manifested in his earliest childhood great compassion towards the poor. While yet in the arms of his nurse, no greater pleasure could be given him than to allow him to bestow alms on the needy. When older, he sent the best dishes from his table to the poor; and it happened more than once, that he gave his own cloak to some beggar, because he happened not to have anything else at hand. He once implored mercy and life for a condemned criminal, who, he said, was destined to become a great saint; and the event justified the prediction. Having passed his youth in acquiring knowledge, and in the practice of virtue, Felix resolved to serve the Almighty in retirement and solitude. He first, however, took holy orders, so as to deprive himself of all hope of ever attaining the crown, from which, by his birth, he was not far removed. After having said his first Mass, he went into a desert, where he led a very austere life, which was made extremely sweet to him by divine consolations; so that he intended to spend his whole life, unknown, in that

lonely place. But the Almighty, who had chosen him for greater work, sent to him a noble young doctor from Paris, named John of Matha, who had also been ordained priest, and who desired to walk in the path of perfection under his direction. St. Felix received him with great pleasure; for he perceived in the candidate great inclination to virtue. They had lived harmoniously together, in great piety, for three years, when, one day, while they were sitting beside a well, in devout discourse, a stag, bearing a blue and red cross between its antlers, came suddenly forth from the bushes. St. Felix, greatly amazed, knew not what to say; but John made use of the occasion to relate a vision which he had had while saying his first holy Mass, and which was vividly recalled to his memory by the appearance of this stag. Both saints sank upon their knees and prayed that they might be favored to recognize more clearly the will of God. Heaven inspired both with an intense desire to labor for the ransom of those prisoners who languished under the yoke of the Turks and other barbarians, and thus save many from the danger of renouncing their faith, and going to eternal ruin. Both were admonished three times during their sleep to found a special order for this end, and to request, at Rome, the necessary permission. Innocent III., who sat at that time on the papal throne, was greatly pleased with such holy intentions, but desired to confer on the subject with some learned men, and consult the will of the Almighty in prayer. During holy Mass the Pope saw the same vision which had been shown to St. John of Matha, during his first Mass, as we related. On the 8th of February, putting away all doubt, Innocent approved the plan of the new "Order of the Most Holy Trinity, for the Redemption of Captives," and invested the two holy founders with the habit. The first monastery was founded in the diocese of Meaux, by means of ample donations from charitable persons whom God had moved to favor the undertaking; whilst others eagerly flocked to the monastery, as soon as it was completed, to devote their lives to the noble work of ransoming their captive brethren. When this happy beginning had been made, St. John again set out for Rome, leaving the government of the house to St. Felix, who, by word and example, led those under him in the path of religious perfection. He represented to them, with special energy, the many and fearful dangers of those Christians who were slaves among the barbarians, as many of them forsook the Christian faith, either from fear of greater misery, or in the hope of regaining their liberty. The same representations he made to the laity in his sermons; and thus, after having awakened in the hearts of his religious a great desire to relieve the captives, he also induced the laity to

contribute liberally to their ransom. With the funds thus collected, the religious of the new order sailed to Africa, where they knew that the Christians were imprisoned. They bought them from the infidels, liberated them from slavery, and saved them, not only from temporal misery, but, what was of much greater importance, from the imminent danger of going to eternal ruin. It is easy to conceive that the disciples of St. Felix, in this holy work, had to combat with many and great dangers, and also to endure numberless sufferings and hardships. But they were so inflamed by their holy Master with love for God and their neighbor, that they feared neither danger nor dishonor, nor even death. All this gave great comfort to St. Felix, as he considered that, in this manner, many souls were saved for eternity. The holy man received great favors from heaven, among which may be counted the vision which he had, in the night preceding the festival of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin. He went, according to his custom, an hour earlier than the rest to the choir, in order to pray. On arriving there, he saw the divine Mother, surrounded by a great many angels. Going towards them, he fell into ecstasy, and with them sang the praises of the Almighty; when one of them told him that he would soon be called into heaven to sing eternally the glory of the Almighty. Felix, greatly rejoicing, called his disciples to him, admonished them most earnestly to remain constant in their devotion to the captives; and, after receiving the holy Sacraments, gave his soul calmly into the hands of his Maker, in the eighty-fifth year of his age.



Ireland was the native place of Abbot Columban, celebrated for his holiness. Shortly before he was born, his mother dreamed that a bright sun emanated from her, which sent its rays through the whole land. Eminent men, to whom she related this dream, looked upon it as a sign that her child would attain to great holiness. Columban manifested, with the first dawn of reason, an inclination to virtue, and a desire to acquire knowledge, very unusual for his tender age. God had endowed him with a very retentive memory, great intelligence and a strong impulse to great things. Besides this, he was of comely appearance, which placed him in danger when he arrived at manhood. To escape this, as also to serve the Lord more faithfully, he resolved, while still very young, to leave the world, and, either in a desert or in the cloister, to work for the salvation of his soul. This plan he soon carried into effect, although his mother was deeply grieved at parting with him. He went first to a hermit,

who had gained great fame by the holiness of his life ; and then into a monastery, where he passed several years in the practice of virtue ; during which time he also made great progress in the study of theology.

The Almighty, who had appointed him to become the teacher and apostle of many others, inspired him, in the course of time, to go, with some other holy men, to France ; and to live and labor there as heaven might appoint. He imparted this desire to his Abbot, who, though loath to part with him, yet bade him obey the divine inspiration without delay. Hence, St. Columban and twelve other religious set sail for France, where they were very graciously received by King Siegbert or by Chilperic, who entertained them most liberally, until they had found a quiet spot wherein to make their dwelling. Columban found at length, in the forests of the Vosges, a place called Anegrai, where he erected a small church in honor of St. Peter, and around it some huts for himself and his companions. Here they lived, far from the distractions of the world, zealous in serving the Most High. Before much time had passed, the fame of Columban's holiness and that of his companions, resounded all over the land ; and many who came to visit the Saint, were so much pleased with his devout discourses, that, forsaking all temporal things, they remained to live under his direction. The number of these became in a short time so great that the Saint erected a monastery, called Luxeu, which became very celebrated. Some years later, the Saint built yet another, as his disciples increased in such a manner that Luxeu could not contain them all. This third monastery was called Fontaines, as it was erected near a spring. The Saint used to retire into some deep forest, before great festivals, to devote several days, with more recollection than was possible in the convent, to prayer and meditation on the divine mysteries. One day, when he was seeking a place suitable for this purpose, he found a dark cavern, the entrance to which was very narrow. He crept in, and saw a large bear that had made its dwelling there, and that looked at him fiercely. Columban went fearlessly up to the beast, and commanded it, in the name of the Lord to depart and seek another shelter. The animal obeyed, and left the cave, which from that time became Columban's retreat. The Almighty, to refresh His servant, caused a spring to issue from the rocks, the water of which was pure and clear as crystal.

Meanwhile, the holiness of Columban became known, not only in France, but also in other countries, and the most distinguished men came from all parts to visit him and commend themselves to his prayers. Among these was Theodoric, king

of Burgundy. Columban received him with great kindness, but knowing the dissolute life which the king led, he exhorted him to treat his queen with the love and esteem due to her, and to dismiss his concubine; adding, that otherwise he would soon lose crown and sceptre for himself and his children. The king, taking this admonition to heart, seemed willing to reform; but Brunehault, his ambitious grandmother, fearing that she would lose her influence in the administration, if the king occupied himself more with the affairs of the State, endeavored to retain him in his bad habits. She feared and hated the holy Abbot, and not only calumniated him to the king, but rested not until Theodoric, with the soldiers of his army, took the Saint from the monastery which he had governed for twenty years, and drove him out of the country. The Saint, after this unjust banishment, went to Besançon, where, by many miracles, he made himself greatly esteemed. Some time after, he secretly returned to his convent; but the wicked Brunehault no sooner heard of it than she induced the king to banish the holy man again, and to threaten him with death if he returned. The soldiers who had to execute this order, stormed the convent, but returned without the Saint, as they had not recognized him, although he had stood before them, among the other religious. Columban, fearing that the wrath of the king would fall upon the entire community, departed, and went to Lorraine, where Clothaire, the king, received him kindly, leaving it to him to select a place for his dwelling. Columban, however, did not accept this favor, fearing to arouse the wrath of Theodoric against Clothaire; and continued his journey into Lombardy. Along the whole route up the Rhine and along the lake of Zurich, Columban, with his companions, like true apostles, preached the word of Christ. He proceeded as far as Milan, where he bravely defended the true faith against the Arians. During his sojourn in this city, he learned that on the mountain range, near the River Po, were standing the ruins of a once celebrated church; and that the place would be most suitable for the erection of a monastery. With the permission of the king, he rebuilt the church, and near it erected a large monastery, which in a short time was filled with zealous servants of the Lord. The holy man continued here the same holy life which had so distinguished him in other places.

At last, the Almighty was pleased to call His faithful and unwearied servant, by a happy death, to his eternal reward. St. Columban ended his earthly career in the last of his foundations, which was called the monastery of Bobio. The Lord glorified him, both before and after his death, by many and great miracles.

In conclusion we must not omit to state the unhappy end of the persecutors of St. Columban. Before the Saint was banished the country, he uttered the following prophecy: "Before three years shall have elapsed, Theodoric, with all his children, will die an unhappy death, and king Clothaire will wear the crown." As he had said, so it happened; for Theodoric died at Metz, in Lorraine, without a sign of repentance. Some say that he was struck by lightning; others, that he was poisoned, at the instigation of the wicked Brunehault. Clothaire took the six sons of Theodoric, prisoners, and killed them with his own hands. Brunehault, the author of all the persecutions of the holy man, and of all the horrible deeds of the king, was mounted on an ass; and, to the derision of the people, she was thus led through the city; after which, she was tied to the tail of a wild horse, and dragged till she was dead. None of the spectators showed her any pity, as it was known to all that the misery which had befallen the whole land, was her work. They praised the justice of the Almighty, who, though sometimes slow in punishing the wicked, overtakes them at last; and whose punishment is the more severe, the longer it has been delayed.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Columban goes into the desert, the better to serve the Almighty; the same was done by St. Felix. Before festivals, St. Columban leaves his monastery, retires into a mountain-cave to pray and meditate more undisturbed. I do not request of you to leave house and home, and conceal yourself in a cavern to serve your Lord; but let me tell you what several holy Fathers advise every one to do. A man, who earnestly desires to save his soul, must sometimes retire, for a short period, from all his cares and business, and thus, so to speak, go into a spiritual solitude. King David did this at night: because, during the day, he was occupied with the affairs of the State. "And I meditated in the night with my own heart" (Ps. lxxvi.). Christ also taught us this by His own example;

for He retired sometimes from the people whom He instructed, and went up into a mountain to pray; He also called His disciples from their work, to rest for a while in the desert. This was done to teach us to lay all business aside, at times, and occupy ourselves with our salvation only. Sundays and Holy-days, or the end of the month are the best times for this. Take an hour at home or in the church, and shutting out all other thought, look into the state of your soul. Ask yourself whether and how you have served God in your station, and what you have done for your salvation; what might keep you from heaven and what might help you to gain it. Pray for pardon for your sins, and make new resolutions as to your future course of life. This kind of spiritual retreat all can make. The Almighty, who has

promised to speak in solitude to your heart, will surely make known to you what you should do and what avoid in order to gain salvation. Believe me, the short hour passed in such a manner, will bring you more benefit and comfort than a thousand other hours or days which you spend in idle amusement and in which, perhaps, you offend the Lord.

II. St. Felix labored long and hard to save the poor Christian captives from the danger of eternal damnation in which they were while among the infidels. Perhaps among those who are under you, or among your friends or relatives, there is some one whom you know to be in danger of eternal damnation. Consider whether you can extricate him from this danger, and go to work without delay. Before all, examine your own soul, and see whether it is not in similar danger, and if so, rescue it immediately. "Whoever will give alms in the right manner," says St. Chrysostom, "must begin with himself, and first give to himself." For, to give alms, is to be charitable, and is a work of charity: but it is written:

"Have pity on your own soul, that you may please the Lord." You are perhaps in a proximate occasion of sin; you have a sinful affection, or a dangerous friendship; your conscience is burdened with some sin, which you perhaps conceal in your confession, out of shame; or you have evil habits, which you do not earnestly endeavor to correct. If this be the case, your soul is in evident danger of eternal ruin. Ah! endeavor to save it without delay from so terrible a danger. Think that it is your own soul, and that the loss of it will be your own loss; and hasten to help it. Delay is fraught with danger. "I pray you," says St. Peter Damian, "by the love of Jesus, do not deceive yourself, do not delay; that you may not ruin your soul by procrastination; lest some unforeseen accident lay you low, or a sudden death take you away, and hell devour you." "Why do you wish to wait for to-morrow?" asks St. Ambrose, "you can gain the present day. Take care lest in losing to-day, you do not gain the morrow. The loss of one single hour may be of eternal injury to you."

TWENTY-FIRST DAY OF NOVEMBER.

THE PRESENTATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

To-day's festival is called the Presentation of Mary, because on this day Joachim and Anna, the holy parents of the Blessed Virgin, consecrated their little daughter to the divine service in the temple at Jerusalem, and Mary consecrated herself to the Almighty. At that time, there were two ways of consecrating children: one was ordained by the law, which required every male child to be offered to God, forty days, and every female child, eighty days after its birth. This ceremony was called

the consecration of the child and the purification of the mother. The second kind of consecration was a voluntary self-oblation by which some persons devoted themselves to the Almighty. There were also many parents who either before, or immediately after their child's birth, consecrated it to the service of the Lord, sometimes for a few years, sometimes for life. To this end, several separate dwellings had been erected in connection with the Temple, for men, women, youths and maidens, where they remained for the time which had been fixed by themselves or their parents. Their occupations consisted in decorating the temple, and in making the garments which the priests and levites wore during their sacred functions. Thus we read in the first book of Kings, that Anne, the spouse of Elkana, made a vow that if she gave birth to a male child, she would consecrate it to the Lord. The Lord blessed her and she brought forth a son, whom she named Samuel, and afterwards consecrated to the Most High, through the hands of the High Priest, Heli. In the second book of the Maccabees, we find mention of virgins, who lived and were educated in the Temple, that is, in a building annexed to it.

It is the belief of several holy Fathers, that Joachim and Anna, being already advanced in years and having no issue, made a vow to God that if He would bless them with a child, and thus take from them the dishonor of being barren, they would consecrate their offspring to His service in the Temple. God heard their prayer and blessed them so greatly, that they became the parents of the most holy of all human beings, Mary, the ever Blessed Virgin. For three years they kept this sacred treasure at home, after which time, although Mary was their only comfort, they resigned her with pious fortitude, in fulfilment of their vow. Hence they went, with their daughter, to Jerusalem, presented her to the priest in the Temple, and consecrated her, through his hands, to the service of the Almighty.

But who can worthily describe the devotion and veneration which Mary manifested at the consecration! She had not only consented cheerfully, but as, notwithstanding her tender years, she was already possessed of her full reason, and knew better than any one else, in heaven or on earth, the Majesty of Him to whom she was consecrated, she had longed for the moment when she was to be given to Him. She went therefore most joyfully to the Temple, her heart full of devotion and love towards God and a fervent desire to serve Him. The priest was at first greatly astonished, not only at the unusual beauty of the little child, but still more at the devotion she showed in such extreme youth. When her parents had given her in charge to the priest, the latter took her to the Altar, to which there was an ascent of fif-

teen steps, on the first of which he placed her. Having, in a few words, bade her parents farewell, the little maiden went joyfully and unaided, from the lowest step to the highest, and casting herself down before the Altar, she consecrated herself to the Almighty with such humility and reverence, that all present were deeply moved. Her consecration differed greatly from that of all other children. Many were brought to the temple only because their parents desired it, and without their own knowledge of the reasons for which it was done. Others wept bitterly at parting with their parents. No other at that tender age, had understood the ceremony, and none had made the consecration with such entire devotion to the Lord.

The Blessed Virgin, however, already gifted with reason, not only consented to the sacrifice thus made by her parents to God, but consecrated herself, entirely and with a happy heart, to His service. How pleasing this sacrifice must have been to the Lord, words are unable to express. It is quite certain that, from the creation of the world until that time, no sacrifice had been so pleasing to Him as that which Mary offered in her own person. Abel, Noah, Aaron, and many more, had sacrificed to the Lord the fruits of the Earth, or dumb brutes; but Mary offered herself. Many parents had consecrated their children to the service of God, but Mary surpassed them all in innocence and grace, in heavenly virtues and gifts; hence, it cannot be doubted that her sacrifice surpassed all others, and was more agreeable to the Almighty. After the consecration, Mary was taken into the dwelling of the maidens destined to serve the Most High, and was numbered among them. There she remained until her marriage with St. Joseph.

Her conduct during this period can be more easily imagined than described; but it is certain that it was more like an angel's than like that of a human being. Her occupation was prayer, reading, meditation and work. In the works of St. Jerome there is a sermon on the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, in which the life she led in the Temple is thus described: She endeavored to surpass in goodness all those with whom she dwelt; to be the first in the nightly vigils; to understand Holy Writ most thoroughly; to be the most humble; to sing the Psalms of David most devoutly; to love God most fervently; to be the most chaste; in a word, to be the first in all virtues, in order to honor the Almighty, and to prove her love to Him. God was the only subject of her conversation. She prayed without ceasing and meditated on the law of the Lord. St. Ambrose, in his instructions to those who had vowed perpetual chastity, gives them Mary as an example, saying emphatically, that her life had been such

that it might serve as a model to all. "Mary," he writes, "was a virgin, not only in body, but also in heart and mind. She was modest in her speech, and humble of heart. She offended no one, had every one's welfare at heart, avoided pride and loved virtue. Nothing bold was in her gaze, nothing frivolous in her words, nothing that was in the least immodest in all her manners. Her body was the index of her mind, a model of piety. She went not to rest until necessity required it, and when her body rested, her soul remained awake." This and much more the above mentioned Father writes, in praise of the Blessed Virgin. St. Bonaventure relates a vision in which the Divine Mother said to a holy person: "I arose always in the middle of the night, went to the Altar of the Temple, and presented my homage and my desires to the Almighty." These desires were for the grace of loving God above all things and with her whole heart; of loving her neighbor for God's sake; of keeping the Commandments of the Lord, and of hating everything that was displeasing to Him. The same holy teacher says also: "Mary was very solicitous that none of her companions should in the least offend the Lord, but that they should always praise Him and never indulge in idle words. He writes further, that Mary occupied her thoughts with holy contemplations, her mouth with devout prayers; but, at the same time, used her hands in sacred work, and admonished others to do the same. Several Holy Fathers write that the Blessed Virgin, soon after entering the Temple, consecrated her virginity to the Lord. Others, with greater reason, maintain that this had been done before, and as soon as she had been conceived, since she was gifted even then with the full use of her reason. The Holy Fathers Ambrose, Jerome, Rupert, Bernard, and many others, think that the Blessed Virgin was the first who made a vow of chastity, and thus set an example, which many thousands, desiring to serve the Lord more perfectly, have followed and are still following. It is quite certain that the Blessed Virgin, from the first use of her reason until the end of her life, always endeavored to do what she knew would make her more perfect, and thus unite her more closely with the Almighty. Hence it is easy to conclude, that she gathered such a treasure of merits, as no Saint ever did or will possess. St. Bonaventure and St. Bernardine of Sienna apply to her the words of the Proverbs of Solomon: "Many daughters have gathered riches, but thou hast surpassed them all." Many daughters, they say, means, many souls, many Saints have gathered riches in merits; but Mary surpasses them all, as well in grace, as in virtues and merits. Hence it follows that her glory in heaven is above that of all other Saints; for which reason she is called by the Catholic Church

Queen of All Saints. Nothing is more just than that we should duly honor so great a Queen, and invoke her with confidence; for the higher she stands above all other Saints, the more powerful is her intercession with God.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. In the third year of her life, Mary, the Blessed Virgin, consecrated herself to the service of the Almighty, and this, not for days or years only, but for ever; for, as long as she lived, she ceased not to serve the Lord. How is it with you? Did you also begin in your tender years to serve the Lord? Or to whom did you dedicate the first years of your life? Ah! confess it with weeping eyes and repentant heart, not to the Lord, but to the world, to the flesh, to Satan, you gave the years of your youth; and perhaps you have not even now made the resolution to serve your God; or, it may be, you think it will be time enough when you are old, though it is unknown to you, whether you will ever count many years. But even had you been assured of this, tell me, do you not deserve to be disowned by the Almighty as a second Cain, since like him, you sacrificed only what was of less value, and not, like the pious Abel, what was the best? God cursed him who took from his flock the meanest for his offering. This curse you also deserve for not having given to the Lord your first and best years, but reserving your old age for Him. Oh! truly you have reason to weep over this wickedness as long as you live. Humbly beg God to pardon you, and resolve, at the same time, to serve Him from this hour most fervently and without ceasing until your end, as the Blessed Virgin did. You have perhaps but a short time more: hence employ every moment

in the service of God. The benefit will be yours, and will last through all eternity.

II. In consecrating herself to the Almighty, the Blessed Virgin gave herself entirely to Him without any reservation. Soul and body, every power of her soul, every member of her body, her whole heart and life, all was given for evermore to the service of the Most High. Doubtless you resolve to-day to serve your Lord most fervently for the future. Consecrate yourself, then, to-day to His service, but without any reservation, your whole heart, your entire life, your soul with all its powers, your entire body with all its members, sacrifice all willingly and for evermore to the Lord. God who desires the whole heart and not a part of it, wishes also your whole soul, your whole body, your entire life. Do you wish to divide your heart and to give one part of it to the Almighty the other to the world and Satan? to serve God with one member of your body, and to offend Him with another? Do you wish to employ your memory to honor God with good thoughts, but to soil your will with wicked desires? Oh! then do not imagine that your sacrifice will be acceptable to God. It will rather be a horror in the eyes of Him who commands us to serve Him alone, and to sacrifice everything to His service. Make to-day, a perfect sacrifice, so that you may, at least in something, follow the Blessed Virgin. And take care that you do not, after the lapse of some time, retract your sacrifice.



SAINT CECILIA.

[Nov. 22.] ST. S. CECILY. A. C. 661.

You consecrate, to-day, your eyes, to the service of God; your tongue, and your hands, with His service; and have the intention to use them only to His service, and to His God's service. Guard yourself, lest, after some hours or days, you should be tempted to misuse them in offending the Lord, who has so graciously

TWENTY-SECOND. THE FEAST OF ST. CECILY.

ST. CECILY AND ST. MARTIN. A. C. 662.

St. Cecily, a Roman maiden of illustrious birth, was the happiness of being instructed, in her youth, by the learned and pious. The love of Christ took such deep root in her heart, that, regarding Him as her bridegroom, she took the vow of virginity, and desired nothing more to youth, but to devote herself for His sake. She constantly carried the *Canticum* of the Church, and read it with great delight, so as to conform her life to its lessons. Whilst she thus lived according to the precepts and statutes of Christianity, her parents promised her, had she married, a rich youth, named Valerian; and when the wedding was fixed and all was joy in her parents' house, she died of a sudden death. According to her wish, she was buried in a costly and dazzling with costly jewels; but in her coffin, no ornament more precious was, as usual, a rough parchment rolled out, and thereon her heart was sorrowful, her trust in God, and her devotion to Him, tasted during the three previous years of her betrothal. Her Spouse to protect her virginity. To her Guardian Angel, to her Guardian Angel and the Blessed Virgin Mary, she was betrothed. When the wedding was over, and the bridegroom was gone, her, Cecily, trusting in God, said gently to herself, "Valerian, I am under the protection of my Spouse, who will protect my virginity. Therefore, be very careful, and do not let me in such a manner that the wrath of the Lord should be kindled against you." This intention she kept in her heart, and she was greatly; but when she informed her parents of her betrothal, and had vowed her virginity to Christ, her parents were not so agreeable it is to God when we keep His commandments, and how we offend Him by breaking them. Her heart was touched, and he said that he also was betrothed to Christ; he could see the Angel under whose protection she was. Cecily



SAINT CECILIA.

<p>You consecrate, to-day, your eyes, your tongue, and your hands, with the intention to use them only in God's service. Guard yourself, lest, after some hours or days, you misuse them in offending the Lord,</p>	<p>for, this would be as much as robbing the Altar of what you have given to the Most High. Mary did not act thus. It is written: "I am the Lord that hate robbery in a holocaust, (Isai. lxi.)</p>
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TWENTY-SECOND DAY OF NOVEMBER.

ST. CECILY AND ST. MAXILINDA, VIRGINS AND MARTYRS.

St. Cecily, a Roman maiden of high nobility, had the happiness of being instructed, in her youth, in the truths of Christianity. The love of Christ took such deep root in her heart, that, choosing Him as her bridegroom, she consecrated her virginity by vow, and desired nothing more fervently, than to shed her blood for His sake. She constantly carried the Gospel with her, and read it with great delight, so as to conform her actions more and more to its lessons. Whilst she thus lived according to the dictates of Christianity, her parents promised her hand to a noble and rich youth, named Valerian, and when the wedding-day arrived and all was joy in her parents house, she alone was sad unto death. According to her station she was splendidly attired, dazzling with costly jewels: but under her magnificent apparel, she wore, as usual, a rough penitential garment, and though her heart was sorrowful, her trust in God wavered not. She had fasted during the three previous days, to move her heavenly Spouse to protect her virginity. To the same end she invoked her Guardian Angel and the Blessed Virgin, the Queen of virgins. When the wedding was over, and Valerian was alone with her, Cecily, trusting in God, said gently but firmly to him: "Valerian, I am under the protection of an Angel, who guards my virginity. Therefore, be very careful that you act towards me in such a manner that the wrath of the Almighty may not be roused against you." This unexpected speech astonished Valerian greatly; but when she informed him that she was a Christian and had vowed her virginity to God, telling at the same time, how agreeable it is to God when we keep our word with Him, and how we offend Him by breaking our vows, his heart was touched, and he said that he also would believe in Christ if he could see the Angel under whose protection she was. Cecily

replied that this could not be unless he was baptized. The youth, desiring to see the Angel, promised to embrace Christianity, if she would procure him an opportunity to be instructed. Cecily informed him of the place where pope Urban was concealed on account of the persecution which the Christians suffered at that period. Valerian went to him, on the following day, and after having been instructed and baptized, returned to his bride. He found her praying, and saw beside her, what he had wished to behold, an Angel surrounded by heavenly brightness. Ancient legends tell us that the Angel held two wreaths of roses and lilies in his hand, one of which he gave to Cecily, the other to the new convert, exhorting both to constancy. Prostrating themselves, both gave humble thanks to the Almighty. Meanwhile, Tiburtius, the brother of Valerian, came to visit them, and having been told what had happened, he also resolved to become a Christian. Valerian took him to the pope, who instructed and baptized him, and thus enabled him to behold the same Angel whom his brother had seen.

The conversion of these two young men could not long remain a secret. Almachius, the Governor, summoned them into his presence, and as they were determined to remain in the Christian faith, he had them both executed, after a long and most painful martyrdom. The holy virgin Cecily was also compelled to appear before the judge. She was first asked where the fortune was concealed which the two brothers had left. She replied, that it had been well disposed of, as the poor had received it. The Governor, enraged at this reply, commanded Cecily to be brought into the idolatrous temple, and if she refused to sacrifice immediately to the gods, she was to die a cruel death. Cecily was taken thither by a company of rough soldiers, to whom, on the way, she represented so strongly the truth of the Christian religion, that they all promised to forsake idolatry. Almachius, still more embittered, ordered Cecily to be taken to her own house, locked into the bathing-room and stifled by the heat. But it was all in vain. The bath was heated a whole day and night without causing the Saint the least inconvenience. She was, at last, condemned to be beheaded. Three times the axe of the executioner fell without being able to sever her head from her body. When, at the third stroke, the Saint sank to the ground, the executioner left her for dead. Cecily, however, lived three days longer, and gave to all that came to see her, the most wholesome instructions. She left her property to the holy pope for the poor, and expressed the wish that her dwelling should be consecrated as a church, which was accordingly done. After three days, her triumphant soul went to her heavenly Spouse, about the middle

of the third century of the Christian Era. We must not omit what the Roman Breviary also records of this holy virgin, that, when she heard the harmony of the music with which her wedding was celebrated, she sang to God in the interior of her heart: "O Lord, preserve my heart and body spotless, that I may not perish." How holy a song, and how agreeable a prayer it was to God and the holy Angels, her history has shown.



Beside St. Cecily, who gave her life for the true faith, we will place another virgin, who suffered death to preserve her purity. Her name is St. Maxilinda. She was born at Cambrai, in the Netherlands. Her parents were not less rich in temporal goods than edifying in their conduct. Maxilinda showed from her earliest childhood, no inclination to those things which other children enjoy. Her pleasure consisted in locking herself in her room and passing the time in praying, working, and reading devout books. Her manners were pleasant and kind, but at the same time modest and earnest. Her conduct in society, where she appeared only at the command of her parents, was so guarded, that all admired her, and were edified. It was generally admitted that, in the whole country, no one could be compared with her either in natural gifts, or in virtue and piety. Her hand was, therefore, eagerly sought by many of the young nobles; but her parents, knowing that she would never marry, firmly rejected all suitors. One of them, named Harduin, a youth of very noble and rich parentage, by dint of prayers and promises, succeeded in winning the favor of Maxilinda's parents, so that, at last, they gave him their consent, without her knowledge. When Maxilinda was apprised of what had been done, she was so much distressed, that she could scarcely utter a word. Having recovered from the first shock, she asked a day for consideration, and going into her room, passed the whole night in prayer, fervently begging the Almighty, graciously to preserve her virginal chastity, which she had consecrated to Him. God accepted her prayer mingled with tears, and sent an Angel to assure her that her purity should remain unspotted, provided only that she would be firm and trust in Him. On the following day, Maxilinda told her parents, in simple words, that she would neither be married to Harduin, nor to any other, since, from her childhood, she had united herself, by a vow of chastity, with a much nobler and richer bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ. Notwithstanding this declaration, Harduin, with the permission of her parents,

appointed a day on which the wedding should take place. The day came and with it came Harduin, accompanied by a great number of his friends, to celebrate the nuptials. Maxilinda's father used all his powers to overcome her opposition. He at first spoke kindly, then more earnestly, entreating her not to dishonor him before so many persons. Seeing that all his entreaties availed nothing, he dragged her forcibly to the place where Harduin and his friends were waiting for her. Having arrived there, she turned fearlessly to her parents and her friends, saying: "With the help of the Lord, to whom I have consecrated myself, Harduin shall never call me his bride, even should he come upon me with a drawn sword." The friends, who had come to witness the ceremony, dispersed at these words; but Harduin, foaming with rage, ran wildly to and fro, and at last left the house. Maxilinda went into her room, and prostrating herself before the Crucifix, thanked the Almighty for having thus protected her when danger was at its height. Fearing, however, that other storms were in store for her, she gave herself more fervently than ever to the practice of good works, to deserve the continued protection of God for the future. Not long afterwards, Maxilinda's parents went to a banquet, and left their daughter, who never went to such entertainments, at home, where she gave herself up to prayer. Harduin, having ascertained that she was alone, went with some of his servants to the house, and searched all the rooms, until he came to the one where the chaste virgin was praying. He forced the door open, and sank upon his knees before her, begging her, with tears in his eyes, to grant his prayer. Maxilinda remained firm, saying that she would a thousand times rather die than lose her virginity. After this, he began to change his manner, and even menaced her with death, if she persisted in refusing him. The chaste virgin was not to be frightened, but cried aloud: "I mind neither you nor your threats; you will never be able to prevent me from fulfilling the vow I have made to God. You may kill my body, but you have no power over my soul." Having said this, she tore herself away from him and fled. Harduin, like one possessed, ran after her, seized her and strangled her, or, as others say, pierced her with his sword. Hardly had the chaste virgin breathed her last, when God punished the wicked murderer with total blindness. Horrified at the darkness which suddenly surrounded him, he cried to his servants for help; but they, fearing that God would punish them also, had run away. Meanwhile the parents of the holy martyr came home, and found their beloved daughter dead, while Harduin wept bitter tears over the horrible crime he had committed.

ted in his blind rage. The feelings of the parents at this sight need not be described. Maxilinda's holy body was buried, with great magnificence, after the whole event had become public. The entire clergy and a large concourse of people accompanied it to the neighboring town, where it was laid to rest in the church of St. Peter and St. Paul. The bishop of Cambrai transported it, three years later, to the place where the holy virgin had so heroically ended her life. Harduin who had wept, day and night, for his former wickedness, was led by his servants to meet the holy relics, and sinking down before them, he publicly confessed his crime, begged the Saint's pardon, and prayed that his sight might be restored through her intercession. His prayer was immediately heard; and having given due thanks to the Almighty, he ceased not, as long as he lived, to praise St. Maxilinda, and invoke her as his intercessor with God. This martyrdom took place in the latter half of the seventh century.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The two Saints, whose history we have related were at the same time virgins and martyrs. St. Cecily was a martyr of faith; St. Maxilinda, a martyr of chastity. St. Cecily manifested, in deeds, that she esteemed the true faith above honor, wealth and life; while St. Maxilinda proved by her death that she preferred chastity to all the treasures of the world, and even to her own life. The one died rather than forsake the true faith: the other, rather than break the vow she had made to God. May the entire Christian world learn from these two Christian heroines, the value of the true faith and chastity. There have been many, who, for temporal gain forsook the true faith, or by an ill advised marriage, placed themselves in great danger of becoming apostates. These will, one day, though too late, learn, to their eternal misery, what they lost and what they gained. There are also many, who for some temporal advantage, or to satisfy their desires, lose their innocence, and thus imi-

tate the traitor Judas, when he offered to sell his divine Master, saying: "What will you give me and I will deliver him unto you?" (Matth. xxvi.) Woe to all these senseless people! In eternity, they will curse their wickedness and blindness, and cry out: "Therefore we have erred from the way of truth, and the light of justice hath not shined unto us." (Wisdom, v.) I hope that my reader does not resemble such blind and foolish people.

II. St. Cecily carried the Gospel continually with her, read it with great delight, and endeavored to conform her life to its precepts. St. Maxilinda passed much time in devout reading, and drew from it, not only the spirit of piety which animated her, but also her love of chastity and her strength to protect it. What book do you carry about? What books do you read? And what sort of spirit do you draw from them? Are your books such that you can gain salvation by following their lessons? or are they such that nothing can be learned

from them but vanity, pride, licentiousness, infidelity, heresy, and contempt of God and His holy religion? If you value your soul, read only such books as St. Paul recommended to Timothy: books that will instruct you in the way you have to walk in order to gain your salvation. Avoid those which would lead you to the broad path of evil and thus precipitate you into eternal ruin. Rest assured that many have fallen into great crimes by reading immoral and heretical books, and have by this means gone to everlasting destruction. Others, on the contrary, by reading a devout book, were animated with true piety, which afterwards, strengthened by the same means, guided them in the way to heaven. Follow the example of the latter, and appoint a time in which you will read the Gospel, or other devout book; and take care, at the same time, that, after the examples of St. Cecily and St. Maxilinda, you conform your life in accordance with the lessons you will receive. "Thou must know," writes St. Jerome, "that God not only commands us to be acquainted with His laws, but also, to live up to them."

III. The purity of these two holy virgins was wonderfully preserved by the Almighty. He protected them while they were in the most imminent danger. To increase Maxilinda's glory in heaven, God permitted her to be slain in defence of her chastity. But why did the Lord thus protect both of them? Because both placed their trust in Him, and prayed for His aid, and did everything in their power to help themselves. If you do not, in like manner, receive the divine protection, in temptations of body and soul, then the fault is in yourself, not in God. Your trust in the Almighty is not what it ought to be. Your prayer is either

faulty or perhaps entirely neglected, and you do not resist earnestly enough. Correct your conduct in this respect, if you wish God to hear you. Do all that is in your power and call on God for help. Repeat frequently the short, but expressive prayer of St. Cecily: "O Lord! preserve my heart and body pure, that I may not go to destruction." Add mortification to prayer, as St. Cecily did, and then trust implicitly in the Lord; for, Holy Writ assures us that God will not forsake those who trust in Him. He has the power to protect, and will surely hold His hand over you. "Do all you can," says St. Bernard, "and leave the rest to the Almighty." He will do all that you are unable to do. "In every danger and temptation, we must endeavor to help ourselves as strenuously, as though there was no God to assist us, or as though we had everything to do for ourselves; but at the same time, we must call for aid on the Most High, as though we possessed no means whatever to help ourselves." Thus speaks St. James of Nisibis.

In conclusion, every parent ought to learn, from the history of St. Maxilinda, the great misfortune he may occasion by promising his children to any one, without their consent, or by forcing them to marry against their inclination. It is natural that parents should advise their children in regard to marriage, and when a child wishes to marry one who is not a Catholic, it is their duty to oppose it with all their power; but to force them to bind themselves for life to one for whom they have no inclination is not allowed; because this occasions dissensions and many crimes for which they will have, one day, to render an account to the Almighty. Children, however, must also know that they commit great sin by giving their promise to any one with-

<p>out sufficient reason, by marrying without the knowledge of their parents or perhaps even against their prohibition. We generally find that such marriages are not blessed ; as,</p>	<p>according to Holy Writ, the Almighty has pronounced an especial curse against children who bring sorrow upon their parents, or who wickedly provoke their anger.</p>
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TWENTY-THIRD DAY OF NOVEMBER.

ST. CLEMENT, POPE AND MARTYR ; AND ST. GREGORY, BISHOP
OF TOURS.

Whilst the holy Apostles, Peter and Paul, were preaching the Gospel at Rome, there came to them Clement, a son of Faustinus, who was related to the Emperor Domitian. After several discourses with St Peter, he saw the error of Paganism in which he had been born and educated, and became a convert to the Christian faith. He progressed so rapidly in virtue and holiness, that he was of great help to Paul in converting the heathen, as the holy Apostle testifies in his Epistle to the Philippians. The unwearied zeal he manifested in such holy endeavors, his purity and other bright virtues, raised him, after the death of Sts. Linus and Cletus, to the government of the entire Church of Christ. In this elevated but burdensome dignity, his holy life was an example to his flock. He gave several excellent laws to the Church, by one of which he divided the city into seven districts, and placed in each a notary to record the deeds, virtues and martyrdom of those who were persecuted for Christ's sake, that posterity, admiring their heroism, might be animated to follow their example. His sermons were so full of deep thought and so powerful, that he daily converted several heathens. Among these was Flavia Domitilla, a niece of the Emperor Domitian, who not only became a zealous Christian, but refusing several advantageous offers of marriage, vowed her virginity to God. He converted Sisinius, one of the most influential men in the city, by a miracle. While yet a heathen, Sisinius went unseen into the secret chapel where the Christians assembled, in order to ascertain what they were doing, and to see whether his wife was among them. God, however, punished him immediately with blindness in both eyes. He discovered himself by calling for some one to lead him home ; and St. Clement, who was present, went to him, and, restoring his sight after a short prayer, he improved the occasion to explain to him the truths of Christianity.

Sisinius, being soon convinced, received holy baptism, and many heathens followed his example. The Emperor Trajan, being informed of this, commanded St. Clement to be banished to the Chersonesus, unless he consented to sacrifice to the gods. Nearly two thousand Christians had already been banished to that region, where they were forced to work in mines and quarries. The holy Vicar of Christ rejoiced to be thought worthy to suffer for his Divine Master, and indignantly refused to comply with the Emperor's command to worship the Pagan idols. He was accordingly transported, and condemned to labor like the others. This fate at first seemed very hard to him, but the thought that he suffered it for Christ's sake, strengthened him. With the same thought he endeavored also to inspire his unhappy companions, when he saw that they became discouraged and lost their patience. He also frequently represented to them the reward which was awaiting them in heaven. A miracle that God performed through him raised him to great consideration even with the heathens. There was a great scarcity of water; and the Christians suffered much from the thirst occasioned by their hard work. St. Clement, pitying them most deeply, prayed to God to help them. Rising from his knees, he saw, on a high rock, a lamb, which seemed, with his raised right foot, to point to the place where water could be found. The holy man, trusting in the Almighty, seized an axe, and, lightly striking the rock, procured a rich stream of clear water, which refreshed all the inhabitants of the country, especially the poor persecuted Christians. So many heathens were converted on account of this miracle, that, in the course of a year, almost all the idolatrous temples were torn down, and Christian churches erected in their stead. Some of the idolatrous priests complained of this to the Emperor, who immediately sent Aufidian, a cruel tyrant, to force the Christians to forsake their faith, and to put St. Clement to death. The tyrant endeavored to induce the holy man to forsake Christ, but finding that all words were useless, he commanded the executioners to tie an anchor to the neck of St. Clement, take him out into the sea, and cast him into the deep, in order that nothing of him should remain to comfort the Christians. The last words of the holy Pope were: "Eternal Father! receive my spirit!" The Christians, who had been encouraged by him to remain constant in their faith, stood on the sea-shore, until the tyrant and his followers had departed, after the death of the Saint. They then knelt in prayer, to beg of the Almighty that He would restore to them the body of their beloved shepherd; and, whilst they prayed, the sea began slowly to retreat from the shore. The Christians, following the retreating water, came to the place

where the Saint had been cast into the sea, and found, to their inexpressible astonishment, a small marble chapel, and in it a tomb of stone, in which the body of the holy Pope was reposing. At his side lay the anchor which had been tied around his neck. The joy and comfort that filled the hearts of the faithful at this sight can more easily be imagined than described. They wished to take the holy body away, but God made known to them that, for the present, it should not be disturbed; and that every year the sea would retreat, during seven days, so as to permit all to visit the shrine of the Saint. This took place for several years, until, at last, by divine revelation, the relics were transported to Rome.



St. Gregory, bishop of Tours, of whom mention is made in the Roman Calendar of Saints, on the 17th of this month, was born in France, in the Province of Auvergne, of wealthy and pious parents, named Florentius and Armentaria. He was early given in charge to St. Gallus, bishop of Auvergne, and, afterwards to St. Avitus, who succeeded to the vacant See. The books written by him, which are still extant, show the high degree of learning he attained under such eminent masters. Not less was his progress in virtue, to which end he was very careful to associate only with such as were renowned for their piety and holiness. Twice he recovered from severe sickness by miracle. The first time, having a dangerous fever, he desired, when all remedies had proved ineffectual, to be taken to the tomb of St. Allyrius, and when he had there said a short prayer, blood began to stream from his nostrils, and he arose entirely restored. In his second illness, he was already so weak, that his physicians despaired of his life. He alone was full of hope, and desired to be taken to the tomb of St. Martin, whom he had chosen as his special patron. At first, his request was refused, through fear that he would expire on the road; but as he insisted, it was at last complied with. No sooner had he been carried to the shrine of his patron, than his health was restored, and his strength returned in such a remarkable manner, that he was able to return home on foot. This miracle incited him to serve God more zealously, to honor his holy patron more than ever, especially by imitating his holy life.

He had great faith in holy relics, which he always carried with him, and by the use of which he worked many miracles. One day, he was travelling on horseback, when suddenly there arose so terrific a storm, accompanied by thunder and lightning,

that his companions became greatly alarmed. He, however, taking his relics in his hand, held them towards the lowering clouds, which parted, and formed, as it were, two great mountains on either side of the road on which the Saint and his party were travelling. Gregory felt some pride in his heart, when the danger was over, that he had thus commanded the storm to cease; but he was punished by the Lord on the spot; for, his horse stumbled, and threw him with such force out of the saddle, that he was for some time unable to move. He failed not to perceive that this was a punishment of his pride, prayed humbly to be pardoned, and promised, in future, to give the honor to God, when by the devout use of the holy relics, any miracles would be wrought. The Almighty, who leaves not even the smallest fault of His faithful servants unpunished, was reconciled, and did not take from the Saint the power of working miracles. These miracles and the many virtues which the Saint possessed, made him so beloved and honored, as well by the clergy as the laity, that, on the death of the bishop of Tours, he was unanimously elected to that See. Having by some means heard of his election before it was publicly announced, he fled, and concealed himself; but he was soon discovered, and not allowed to make any objections. Hard as it had seemed to him to accept the government of the See, he was untiring, zealous and blameless in the discharge of its duties. He used all the strength of his mind to promote the honor of the Almighty, and to animate his flock to be solicitous for the salvation of their souls. His frequent sermons, his kind exhortations, and, above all, his virtuous life, had in a very short time accomplished the work of many years. Much study and writing, as well as his continual austerities and incessant labors for the welfare of those under his care, brought on the Saint several maladies, all which he bore with admirable patience, but of some of which he was cured by invoking the intercession of his patron, St. Martin. The following incident shows again how the smallest faults of the servants of God do not go unpunished. It was Christmas night, and the holy bishop's duty was to be in Church; but as he had watched during the whole of the preceding night, he was so overcome with sleep, that he lay down for a short rest to his weary body. But hardly had he closed his eyes, when a man of commanding appearance stood before him, and in an earnest tone of voice said: "Rise instantly, and go into the church!" The frightened Saint awoke, and thinking it a dream, crossed himself, and was soon once more lost in sleep. The same commanding figure appeared a second time, and repeated the words still more emphatically; but the Saint was so fast asleep that he

awoke not. When the stranger returned the third time, he struck the bishop sharply, saying : " Thou, who shouldst awaken others, sleepest thou thyself ? " This took from Gregory all desire for sleep ; he rose without delay, went to the church, begged God to forgive him, and atoned for his negligence.

In the sixteenth year of his Episcopate, he went to Rome, not only to visit the holy shrines, but also to confer with Gregory the Great, who had just been raised to the Papal chair. The holy Pope had heard much of the virtues, learning and many noble qualities of our Saint. The two Saints differed widely from one another in their external appearance. The Pope was tall and majestic, while the bishop was of low stature, and of very insignificant appearance. When the Pope saw him, he marvelled in his own mind that so great a soul could dwell in so small a body, and that so ill-shaped a form could be filled with such precious gifts. Our holy bishop knew, by Divine inspiration, the thoughts of the Pope, and said to him : " Holy Father ! the Lord has made us, and not we ourselves. Little men, as well as tall ones, may receive noble gifts from the Almighty." This made the Pope conceive a still higher esteem for him ; so that he granted him and the Church of Tours many favors and privileges, and at last dismissed him with honor and veneration.

The holy bishop returned from Rome to Tours, and continued his labors for the salvation of souls until the year 595, when he ended his most holy life, after an episcopate of twenty-three years. On his death-bed, out of deep humility, he desired his body to be buried where everybody might walk over it. The clergy, however, who duly esteemed the holiness of their bishop, did not carry out this wish, but erected a magnificent tomb, to the left of that which contained the body of St. Martin. Here the remains of the holy bishop were deposited, and his memory became famous on account of the many miracles that were wrought there.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. Did you observe how St. Clement encouraged himself and his fellow captives in the hard labor they had to perform ? To work for the sake of Christ, and to expect for one's work an eternal reward in heaven, is surely enough to make all suffering and exertion sweet. Every man is bound to</p>	<p>work according to his station, and it is quite sure that we are in danger of losing our souls, if we do not work as we ought, but lead an idle, luxurious and sensual life. One station, however, has harder and more troublesome work than another, and there are numbers of people who earn their bread by</p>
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the sweat of their brow and have, day and night, hardly an hour for rest. It is quite natural that these sometimes become impatient, as we see in many servants, artisans and day-laborers. Their impatience goes so far that they become dissatisfied with God's providence in their regard, and murmur against Him, curse their labor, or perform it unwillingly; and thus not only lose all the merits which they might have earned, but incur heavy responsibility. I would ask such people to recollect, that their work, if performed with a good intention, in the grace of God and according to His will, will merit for them great glory in heaven. They ought to arm themselves against the impatience which sometimes rises in them, with the thought of the reward that awaits them in heaven; for God recompenses every man according to his work, as Holy Writ teaches us. Ought not every one to work with pleasure, when he expects an eternal reward?

II. St. Gregory was punished because he was not in Church at the time of devotion; although the omission was no great sin, and was based on a good reason. What do those lazy Christians say to this who show themselves in Church only when they are obliged to do so under pain of committing sin? They do not assist at Mass during the week, nor at Vespers on Sundays, because they are too lazy. They say: "I am not compelled to

do it. God has not commanded it. To assist at holy Mass on Sundays and holy days is commanded, therefore it is my duty, but further I am not obliged to go to Church." Is that the way to act towards the Great God? That we do our duty and omit nothing which binds under penalty of sin, is but right. But to do nothing more, in honor of God and for the salvation of our soul, is wrong and dangerous. What would become of us, if God acted towards us in a similar manner? Is the Almighty *obliged* to to give us His daily aid? Is it His *duty* to protect us, soul and body against the many dangers that are constantly menacing us? Is He *bound* to restore us to health when we are sick, to provide us with temporal comforts, to give us long life, nay, even to protect us one week, or even one single day?

And if He were to give us nothing but what He is obliged to give, how would it be with us? Consider this well! We all desire that God should be generous to us; hence we must all endeavor to be, if we may say so, generous to Him, and not only do what we are obliged to do, but more, much more. Hence, for example, besides many other things, we should not only hear Mass on Sundays and holydays, but also assist at vespers, and visit the Church during the week. "The more generous we are to God," says St. Ignatius, "the more generous shall we find Him towards us."

TWENTY-FOURTH DAY OF NOVEMBER.

ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS.

In 1542, was born at Fontiveros, a hamlet of old Castile, St. John of the Cross, renowned through the entire Christian world,

as the restorer of the Carmelite Order. His mother, after his father's early death, went to Medina del Campo, where John commenced his studies, and continued them until he entered the order of the Blessed Virgin of Mount Carmel. From his early youth he had entertained a child-like devotion to the Blessed Virgin, who more than once saved him most miraculously from death. One day, when playing with some other lads around a deep pond, he fell into it. In this danger, the Divine Mother appeared to him in a most beautiful form, and offered him her hand, to draw him out of the water. But as his hands were much soiled, he hesitated to take those of so brilliant a lady; whereupon his Guardian Angel, or some other inhabitant of heaven, held out to him from the edge of the pond, a long pole, by the aid of which he was happily saved. At another time he fell into a well, and when all feared that he was drowned, they saw him sitting quietly upon the water. When they drew him out, he said that the Queen of Heaven had caught him in her cloak, and thus prevented his sinking. Before he was nine years old, he showed a wonderful zeal in mortifying his body, chastising himself by taking only a short rest on a hard bed, and by voluntary fasts. While yet a student, he nursed, with great solicitude and charity, the sick in the hospitals. After he had taken the Carmelite habit, he was not satisfied with the penances then practised in the convent, but endeavored to regulate his life in accordance with the first rules and ancient austerity of the Order. When he prepared himself to say his first holy Mass, he searched his conscience very carefully, but found no grievous fault. He then gave humble thanks to the Almighty, and during his Mass, begged for the grace to be kept in future free from all mortal sin. His prayer was accepted, and he heard the words: "I grant thee thy wish." From that time St. John never offended the Lord by a mortal sin, nor voluntarily by a venial one. St. Teresa, who lived at that period, said of him that he was a Saint, and had been one all his life. This renowned and holy virgin met St. John at Medina, and conferred with him about her desire to found houses for religious, who would live according to the original strict regulations of the Carmelites. John, who, in his eagerness to live in greater austerity, had thought of joining the Carthusian monks, asked St. Teresa's advice. She told him that it would be more agreeable to God, if he remained in his Order, and restored among the men the same primitive rigor which she was endeavoring to restore among the women. She added, that God had called him to this work. John took counsel with God and his confessor, and then resolved to follow St. Teresa's advice. He erected his first monastery on a farm

which had been presented to him for this purpose; and God so visibly blest his undertaking, that he not only filled his house, in a short time, with zealous men, but was enabled also to found several other convents.

In these religious houses, all the inmates lived so holy and so austere a life, that many thought it was more to be admired than imitated. The Saint was an example to all, and one could hardly imagine a penance which he did not practise. He gave no ear to those who told him to moderate his severities, but said: "The narrow path leading to heaven cannot be travelled by me in a manner less austere." The hardships he endured in founding his monasteries, and in restoring the severe regulations of the Order; the persecutions and wrongs he suffered, cannot be described in the short space allotted to us; yet in all these trials he was never despondent. The love of God possessed his heart so entirely, that he desired nothing but to labor and to suffer for His honor. The Lord asked him one day what recompense he desired for all his trouble and labor. "Nothing else, O Lord, but to suffer and to be despised for Thy sake," was his answer. Three things he used to ask of the Almighty:—first, much work and much suffering; secondly, not to depart this life as a superior; thirdly, that he might live and die despised. So unusual a desire to suffer and to be despised, was the result of his meditation on the Passion of Jesus Christ, and of his great love to God. This love was so intense, that his countenance was frequently seen radiant with a heavenly light, especially when he spoke of divine things. At the time of prayer, as well as during holy Mass, he often fell into ecstasy and was dissolved in tears. Our Lord once appeared to him in the same form as when He died for us on the Cross. This picture remained so indelibly imprinted on the Saint's memory, that it almost daily drew tears from his eyes. Into all those over whom he had the slightest influence he endeavored to instil a tender devotion to our crucified Lord, as well as to the Most Holy Trinity and to the Blessed Eucharist. His language to sinners was so forcible, that he converted even the most hardened. He was much aided in this by the gift which the Almighty had bestowed upon him, of reading the thoughts of the heart. Many who came to him were reproached with their secret sins, and admonished to reform their lives. He possessed also the gifts of prophecy, of driving out devils, and curing all kinds of diseases. Besides this, he had many visions of the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, St. John, and Christ the Lord. Especially remarkable were the heavenly favors with which this great servant of the Almighty was comforted during an imprisonment of nine months, to which he was un-

justly condemned. Christ appeared to him and said: "Behold! John, I am here! Fear not. I will rescue thee!" The Blessed Virgin, accompanied by a great many Saints, appeared to him, and said: "My son, be patient and endure; for your trials will soon give way to joy." In another vision, she admonished him to escape from the prison, promising him her assistance; a promise which she also kept. St. Teresa, who, during her life, had been closely united with him, appeared also to him after her death, speaking to him most kindly. In his adversity she comforted him, and encouraged him to new labors for the honor of God.

The reward of all the work which the holy man had accomplished, as also of the trials and tribulations he had suffered, was at length bestowed upon him, in the year 1591, when he was in the forty-ninth year of his age. He was seized with fever, in the hermitage of Pegnuela, and was brought from there to Ubeda, according to his wish. He had an ulcer on that part of his right foot where the holy feet of our Lord were pierced with nails. To open it, the surgeon was obliged to make a deep incision. The pain thus caused was very great; but greater still was the patience of the Saint, who even rejoiced at bearing, in some manner, the image of the sufferings of Christ, and at having five wounds on one foot. God had already, some time previously, revealed to him the hour of his death; and the Blessed Virgin, whom the Saint had always especially honored, appeared to him on the eve of the Immaculate Conception, saying that she would come for him on the Sunday after the festival. When the physicians told him that his end was not far distant, he said, in the words of the Psalmist: "I was glad when they said unto me, We shall go up into the house of the Lord." Half an hour before his death, he called all his religious to him, exhorted them to persevere in their zeal, and said: "My parting hour draws near." After the usual prayers of the Church, he heard the bells ring for the midnight Matins. "I shall sing the Matins in Heaven," said he; after which, taking the Crucifix, he kissed it most devoutly, and calmly ended his holy life, saying: "Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my soul." A large ball, as of fire, was seen above the dying Saint. After his death, his countenance beamed with a heavenly brightness, and was so beautiful that none grew weary of looking at him; while at the same time such delicious odor emanated from him, that the whole monastery was filled with it. The Almighty has carefully preserved his body incorrupt until this hour.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. John asked of God, in his first Mass, the grace of remaining free from all mortal sin ; and at another time, he begged to suffer, to labor, and to be despised for Christ's sake. Oh ! how different from this is the object of your prayers ! What do you seek and ask of God ? To what end do you promise masses, fasts, pilgrimages, and prayers ? Is not almost everything you ask temporal ? When you, your child, your husband or wife is sick, then you promise in your prayers to do all that is possible in order that God may ward off the disease. When you have a cross to bear, you pray to God to release you from it. Although it is praiseworthy to fly to God for refuge in such circumstances, tell me, why do you not ask His assistance in much more weighty matters, in such as concern your soul ? Why do you not ask as often or oftener and more earnestly for spiritual gifts, and beg the Almighty to avert spiritual evils ? Is not this an incontestable proof that you are far more solicitous for your body and your temporal welfare, than for your soul and your salvation ? And is not this not only unreasonable, but even wicked ? Correct this fault in future, and pray to God frequently and fervently to bestow spiritual gifts and graces upon you, and to avert from you spiritual and eternal evils. Pray to Him for the grace to avoid sin ; to be freed from temptations, or to be upheld in battling against them, for strength to correct evil habits, to overcome sinful inclinations or to practise virtues ; to die a happy death, and to escape eternal destruction. "Pray," says Cardinal Hugo, "for all that you need for your salva-

tion." Such graces are more necessary than all others, and you may be sure that they are useful to you, while you do not know that temporal blessings are for your good.

II. Although St. John worked so much for the honor of God, and had been favored by the Lord with so many revelations, and other extraordinary gifts, yet he was unjustly cast into prison, and remained in it nine months. This shows very clearly, that suffering and persecution, whilst we endeavor to live piously, are no sign that we are in disfavor with God, or forgotten by Him ; but that He loves us and desires to lead us to heaven by the same path Christ walked. It is a mark of our future salvation ; since, by suffering, we become conformable to Christ, and may hope to partake of His glory in heaven. You believe that you are in favor with God when all goes well with you ; but not when you have crosses and trials. The Saints judged quite differently: "It is a sign of God's love to me," says St. Thomas of Villanova, "a sign of future salvation, when the Lord gives me to drink of the cup of suffering." And St. Peter Damian writes: "When a man lives piously, and yet suffers, let him think that he belongs to the true members of Christ ; for as he now follows Him in suffering, so will he also partake of His glory in heaven." But when one who does not live piously, has to suffer, let him think that God wishes to save his soul. Why ? St. Augustine gives the following reasons: "He who scourges you in this world, does it to correct, not to condemn you. Hence, be patient when He punishes as a father, that you may not

find in Him, one day, a severe judge." When God sends your chastisements while you are living in sin, He does it to admonish you to reform and do penance, that He may not be obliged to punish you in eternity. "Hence," says St. Greg-

ory Nazianzen, "we ought rather to wish that God would punish than spare us, when we have sinned." To sin and not be punished in this world, is a sign that God will punish us in the world to come.

TWENTY-FIFTH DAY OF NOVEMBER.

ST. CATHERINE, VIRGIN AND MARTYR.

St. Catherine was born at Alexandria, of pagan parents. She was gifted with great personal beauty, and possessed so extraordinary a mind, that she mastered all the sciences which, at that period, flourished in her native city. The only science of which she had no knowledge was that of eternal salvation; but this, too, she at last obtained in the following manner: It seemed to her, in her sleep, that the Queen of Heaven was standing before her in wondrous beauty, carrying her divine Son in her arms. But the latter, turning His face from her in displeasure, said that Catherine was ugly, because she had not been baptized. Catherine awoke, and, while thinking over her dream, she was inspired by Heaven to resolve to become a Christian. When sufficiently instructed, she received holy baptism, after which the Blessed Virgin again appeared to her with Christ, who, looking tenderly at Catherine, placed a ring on her finger, as a sign that He had chosen her for His bride. On awaking, she found a ring on her finger, and, without delay, determined to consecrate her virginity to the Lord, and to become a more zealous Christian.

Maximin, the emperor, had appointed a certain day to celebrate a public sacrifice in honor of the false gods, and all the inhabitants of the city were commanded to take part in it. Catherine was deeply grieved to see that the people should thus honor the devil, and not have any knowledge of the true God. Arming herself with courage, she went fearlessly into the temple, where the emperor personally assisted at the sacrifice, and, addressing him with Christian freedom, she represented to him his blindness in worshipping idols, and endeavored to convince him of the truth of Christianity. The emperor was greatly surprised that a maiden should dare to speak thus to him, but was, at the same time, fascinated by the appearance and eloquence of

Catherine. No sooner had he returned to his palace, than Catherine again appeared before him, and spoke so forcibly of the falsity of the heathen gods, and of the truth of the Christian religion, that the emperor knew not what to reply. What he was unable to do, he thought others could do for him; therefore he summoned some of the most learned men into his presence, to answer Catherine's arguments, and persuade her to renounce the Christian faith. But the Almighty, who, by a feeble maiden, could bring to naught the wisdom of the pagan sages, inspired St. Catherine with such eloquence, that she succeeded in convincing them of their error so completely, that they publicly renounced it, and proclaimed the Christian faith as the only true one. The emperor, enraged at so unexpected an issue, ordered these new confessors of Christ to be immediately executed. He then endeavored to win Catherine from her faith by flatteries and promises; and when he found that his words made no impression on the mind of the virgin, he began to threaten, and finally sent her away to be tortured. She was scourged so cruelly and so long, that her whole body was covered with wounds, from which the blood flowed in streams. The spectators wept with pity; but Catherine, strengthened by God, stood with her eyes raised to heaven, without giving a sign of suffering or fear; After this cruel treatment she was dragged into a dungeon, and, by the command of the emperor, was left without food, in order that she might slowly pine away. But God sent an Angel, who healed her wounds and filled her heart with indescribable comfort. The Lord Himself appeared to her, encouraged her to fight bravely, and promised her the crown of everlasting glory. Some writers add, that the empress, having heard much of Catherine's wonderful learning, eloquence and fortitude, had deep compassion upon her, and secretly went at night with Porphyrius, the captain of the guard, to visit her in her dungeon. When she beheld Catherine's wounds healed, and the virgin resplendent with more than human beauty, she was speechless with surprise. Catherine made this miracle an occasion to speak to her of the omnipotence of the Most High, and of the falsity of the heathen gods. She spoke with such overwhelming eloquence, that the empress, as well as Porphyrius, promised to embrace Christianity.

Some days later, when the emperor was informed that Catherine was not only still alive but in better health than ever, he had her brought before him, and again assailed her with promises and menaces. Finding, however, that she was as firm as before, he gave orders that she should be bound to a wheel studded with sharply-pointed spikes and knives. The Christian

heroine was not horrified at this inhuman order, but called with unwavering trust on God. When the executioners had seized her, and bound her on the wheel, the Almighty sent an Angel, who loosened the fetters and broke the wheel to pieces. Many of the spectators, on beholding this miracle, cried aloud: "Great is the God of the Christians! He alone is the true God!" Maximin remained blind, and was thinking of new torments, when the empress came forward, reproached him with his barbarity towards a weak and innocent maiden, and boldly confessed that she herself recognized and worshipped no other god but the God of the Christians. The tyrant, hearing these words, lost all control over himself, and ordered the empress and Porphyrius to be immediately beheaded, and Catherine, as an enemy of the gods, to be taken to the public market-place and put to death by the sword. The fearless virgin went joyfully to the appointed place, exhorted all the people who had come to witness her death to abandon idolatry, prayed to God for their conversion, and then received the stroke that sent her soul to heaven. Ancient authors testify that milk flowed from the body of St. Catherine instead of blood, as had formerly happened at the death of St. Paul. Her body, they add, was miraculously carried by angels and buried on Mount Sinai, in Arabia.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Before Catherine was baptized she saw that the Divine Child in the Blessed Virgin's arms turned its face from her; but after she had been received in the holy Church by baptism, it looked most tenderly at her. The reason of this was that before baptism, she was in sin, and after it, she was cleansed and endowed with spiritual beauty. Sin deforms the soul of man and makes it horrible in the eyes of God. Baptism, and after baptism, true penance, cleanses it again from all impurities, and gives it such beauty, that even the Almighty looks upon it with love. What is the appearance of your soul? If it is stained with one single sin, it is more deformed and horrible in the sight of God, than anything on earth. It resembles Lucifer, but is more horrible

to look upon than he. Lucifer was the most beautiful of Angels, but one sin changed him to such a degree, that if you saw him, you would die of horror. How dreadful must be the appearance of your soul, if it is disfigured not only by one, but by many sins? Why then do you not hasten to do penance, which will cleanse like a second baptism? Why do you not endeavor to keep your soul clean and beautiful? If your face bore a blemish, which made you an object of disgust to every one, would you not make every effort to remove it? Why not do the same with your soul, which, on account of sin, is a horror to the Almighty? If you were assured that, immediately after committing sin, you would lose all beauty of face and form, and that you would

be changed into a frightful monster, would you commit the sin? Most certainly not. Why then do you become guilty of it, knowing that it deforms your soul, that it destroys all its beauty, and changes it, in the eyes of God and all the Saints, into a most frightful monster? "Those who wish to preserve the beauty of their soul, avoid sin; for there is nothing that deforms the soul so much as sin," writes St. Lawrence Justinian.

II. Catherine took great pains to acquire worldly knowledge, but at last became acquainted also with the most necessary of all sciences, that of salvation. All other sciences would have been useless to her without this one. There are a great many persons in our days, who study many different sciences and arts; they spare neither expense nor labor nor time to become proficient in them, and they are honored by the world for their acquirements. But the science of salvation, the one most needed of all, is not attained nor esteemed. We find persons in the higher stations of life, who know not even the first principles of the true faith. Other knowledge they have acquired, but they know less of the science of salvation than many of the lower classes, less than children ten or twelve years old. What does all their science profit them? of what avail is all they have learned, when they do not study the science of salvation and do not conform their lives to its precepts? Should you ask in what the science consists, St. Thomas will answer you as follows: "In knowing, first, what you must believe; secondly, what you must hope and fear; thirdly, what and whom you must love; fourthly, what you must do; and fifthly, what you must avoid to gain life everlasting." To say this in fewer words, it consists in knowing what we must believe, do, and avoid

in order to gain heaven. And where can we learn this science? Certainly not in worldly, or immoral books, not in the theatre, not in the society of frivolous people; but in sermons and instructions, in devout books and pious meditations. Have you heretofore endeavored to attain this science? Have you employed to this end all necessary means? Do you conduct yourself in accordance with the precepts of this science? Three important questions which well deserve to be seriously considered. For if you do not endeavor to learn the science of salvation, if you do not employ the necessary means for learning it, you never will learn it, and hence will be for ever unhappy, for your ignorance will be wilful, and therefore guilty. And if, though you have acquired this great science, you do not live in accordance with its teachings, then your knowledge of it will help you as little as it helps the devils and the damned, who also knew what was necessary to gain salvation, but lived not in accordance with their knowledge. "It is of no avail," says St. Prosper, "to learn what we must do, and not to rule our conduct accordingly." Christ says: "If you know these things, you shall be blessed if you do them." (John xiii.) Knowledge alone does not save, but living and acting in accordance with our knowledge, gains us life everlasting. To know and not to act accordingly, makes us deserving of punishment. Christ Himself says of the servant who knew the will of his Lord and acted not accordingly: "He shall be beaten with many stripes." (Luke xii.) What is to be done, therefore, it is easy to infer. Endeavor to learn the science of salvation, employ all the means necessary for its acquirement, and then regulate your life by your knowledge. Parents are obliged, under pain

<p>of eternal punishment, to see that their children are early instructed in this science, which is more needful</p>	<p>knowledge for them than any other. Woe to those parents who neglect this duty!</p>
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TWENTY-SIXTH DAY OF NOVEMBER

ST. PETER, PATRIARCH OF ALEXANDRIA, MARTYR; ST. CONRAD, BISHOP
OF CONSTANCE.

St. Peter, a man of great virtue and learning, was patriarch of Alexandria, his native city. At the time when the Emperors, Dioclesian and Maximian, endeavored to extirpate the Christian religion, he did all in his power to strengthen the Christians in the true faith and encourage them to prepare for martyrdom. He himself desired nothing more ardently than to give his life for Christ's sake; but the faithful forced him to conceal himself until the persecution ceased. Hardly had this storm abated, when Meletius, a bishop, gave him new trouble, by promulgating heretical dogmas, and committing other crimes, for which St. Peter had to depose him from his see and excommunicate him. The conduct and the doctrine of Meletius were defended, in defiance of St. Peter, by Arius, a proud and ambitious priest of Alexandria; and as neither prayers nor threats could move Arius to desist from such unjust and wicked proceedings, the zealous Patriarch saw himself obliged to separate him also, by excommunication, from the Church of Christ.

During this schism of the Church, an imperial officer arrived at Alexandria, seized St. Peter, and cast him into a dungeon. Arius thought that, after the death of St. Peter, he would surely succeed to the patriarchal chair if he were reconciled to the Church. He therefore pretended to repent of his fault, and going to the clergy, he requested them to beg the Patriarch to revoke the sentence of excommunication, declaring that he had abandoned the cause of Meletius, and was resolved to live and die a Catholic. Achillas and Alexander, moved by his deceitful words, begged St. Peter to grant the request. The Patriarch, enlightened by God, replied with a deep sigh: "I know that Arius is full of hypocrisy and blasphemy; how can I receive him again into the Church? You must know that in excommunicating him, I have not acted of my own accord, but by inspiration from the Almighty. Only last night, Christ appeared to me in the form of a beautiful youth, clothed in a

snow-white garment, which was sadly rent. I was terrified, and asked: 'Lord, what is the meaning of this? Who has torn Thy robe?' He answered: 'Arius has done it; for, by his heresy, he has divided My Church and will make the rent still larger.'" Peter added that Christ had forbidden him to receive Arius again into the pale of the Church, and commanded Achilles and Alexander also to reject him, when they would, one after the other, succeed to the patriarchal chair. Having said this, the Saint admonished them to guard, with fatherly care, the flock of Christ, and then, with his blessing, dismissed them. Soon after, by command of the emperor, St. Peter was dragged to the place of execution, without having had a trial. The Christians endeavored to interfere; but the Saint hastened joyfully to the spot where he was to receive the crown of martyrdom. His death happened in the year 310. The Christians carried the holy body into the Church, clothed it in the pontifical robes, and placed it upon the chair of St. Mark, on which Peter's humility and his reverence for the holy Evangelist had never allowed him to sit in his lifetime, as he always sat down on one of the steps leading to it. Having for some time showed all due honors to the holy body, they laid it into the tomb.



St. Conrad, who was greatly celebrated, in the tenth century, on account of his erudition and virtues, as well as for his miracles, was descended from the noble house of the Counts of Altorf. The pious and retired life he led from his early youth made him a general favorite. He studied the liberal arts and the higher branches of knowledge with so much success, that he deserves to be counted among the great men of his time. Noting, Bishop of Constance, a man who appreciated virtue and talent, received Conrad among the canons of his church, and often consulted him. In this office, Conrad strove to live still more virtuously than before. Towards God he was full of humility and reverence; towards his neighbor, kind and liberal: but towards himself, austere and without pity, constantly chastising his body with penances, and denying himself every comfort and recreation. In one word, his whole conduct was blameless and holy. He took special care of the poor and oppressed, procured them free access to the bishop, and used all his influence to second their requests. After the death of the provost of the Cathedral, Conrad was unanimously chosen as the most worthy to fill that office. He was raised to a still higher dignity on the death of Bishop Noting. Udalrich or Ulric, the holy

bishop of Augsburg, being very solicitous for the welfare of the see of Constance, had ordained public prayers and a three days' fast, that God would direct the choice of a successor to the late bishop; and when the day of election came, the assembled Canons requested him to give the first vote for the one whom he thought most worthy. Udalrich, without hesitation, gave his vote for Conrad. All present joined him, without further deliberation; and thus Conrad became bishop, although his consent was not obtained without difficulty. For forty-two years he governed his see to the great benefit and happiness of his flock. His first care was to satisfy God and his own conscience, by fulfilling the duties of his station. Those virtues which the holy Apostle desires in a bishop, he endeavored to acquire and to practise, and daily gave several hours to prayer. He delighted in devout discourse, and more than once he continued in it with St. Udalrich, until far into the night, as he felt that it animated him to serve the Almighty with more zeal. But he was an enemy to all useless and still more to frivolous conversations; and endeavored, by preaching, instructing and exhorting, to keep his flock from sin and crime and to lead them to virtue. The beautiful example which he set before them by his own holy life, gave strength to his words. The honor of God he sought to increase, by building three magnificent churches. Three times he crossed the sea to visit the places hallowed by the foot-prints of the Lord. To comfort the poor, he built a hospital in the city, where, in honor of the Apostles, twelve poor persons were lodged and fed each day. Many other generous deeds which he performed we must omit for want of space, and we will only add, that God preserved the life of His faithful servant several times most miraculously, and glorified him before the world with wonderful graces. Among the latter were the gifts of miracles and of prophecy. As a proof of the latter, we find in his history the following incident: The holy bishop one day surprised a pious youth, named Gebhard, who had accidentally sat down in the Episcopal chair. Frightened at the sight of the prelate, the youth rose and ran away. Conrad, however, calling him back, said: "Gebhard, thou hast taken my place too early, thou wilt not take possession of it after me, but after my successor." The word of the Saint was fulfilled. After his death, which took place in the 43d year of his administration, Gamenold was elected bishop, and after him, Gebhard. The tomb of St. Conrad became the refuge of all who were infirm and afflicted.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Peter is one of those glorious martyrs, who joyfully hastened to the place of execution to give their lives for the true faith. Have you not sometimes desired that you had lived at that period, and given your blood for Christ? I praise you for having had such a pious wish. But as you have no occasion now to die a martyr for the love of the Saviour, endeavor at least to live for Him, and to be a martyr without shedding your blood. How can this be done? Origen says: "We can be martyrs without shedding our blood, by patiently bearing crosses and trials." In like manner speaks St. Bernard, when he says: "By preserving true patience continually in your mind, you may become a martyr without the sword." St. Gregory says the same, and remarks, also: "To bear wrongs and persecutions patiently, and to love our enemy, is a kind of martyrdom." "It is martyrdom," says St. Chrysostom, "when we bear poverty patiently for God's sake." "If a Christian," writes St. Augustine, "lives according to the gospel, his entire life is one cross, one long martyrdom." The same holy teacher instructed us, on a former occasion, that we are martyrs by conquering our passions, by avoiding lust, by preserving justice, by despising avarice and by restraining pride. In a sermon of St. Lawrence, we read that "martyr," according to the Greek, means "witness." "As often, therefore," says he, "as we fulfil the commands of Christ, and do good, so often are we witnesses of the Lord, and in that sense, martyrs." Hence you may become a martyr of Christ, in this

manner and you will find frequent opportunity for it. Endeavor, therefore, to bear patiently crosses and sufferings; live according to the Gospel of the Lord; moderate your passions; be chaste, and avoid all vices; let your conduct be witness of your fidelity to your Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be a true, though bloodless, martyr.

II. St. Conrad loved devout discourses and was an enemy to all useless, still more to all frivolous conversations. If you desire to avoid many sins, flee from vain, useless, unchaste, in a word, from sinful conversations, and seek opportunities of discoursing on pious subjects, that you may be animated to serve the Lord with greater zeal. St. Thomas of Aquin says: "Nature has given to unreasoning animals, hearing, sight, taste and smell; but language only to man, as a rational being; in order to teach us that speech is a mark of reason, and that it should be used with reason." Now let me ask you; is it not against all reason that you speak seldom or never of God and divine subjects; and speak much and often of things which offend Him who gave you speech and preserved it to you? Is not this contrary to all reason? "God gave us mouth, eyes, and ears," says St. Chrysostom, "that we might serve Him with the same." How shall we then be able to justify ourselves, when we do not use them to this end, but misuse them to offend the majesty of the Most High? Or, can it be reasonable to turn the means given us to serve God into means for offending Him?

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY OF NOVEMBER.

ST. JAMES, SURNAMED INTERCISUS, AND ST. VIRGIL, BISHOP OF
SALTZBURG.

St. James, who received the surname Intercisus. because he was cut to pieces for his faith, was by birth a Persian, but by faith a Christian, born of Christian parents. On account of his extraordinary talent and amiability, he was a great favorite of King Isdegerdes. The only thing that displeased the king, who was a heathen, and an enemy of the Christians, was that James professed Christianity and did not recognize the false gods. Hence the king endeavored to make him faithless to his religion, and by flatteries and promises at length conquered James, so that he went to the idolatrous temple, and, by sacrificing to the idols, denied the Christian faith. The pious mother and the wife of James were horrified at this unexpected and wicked apostasy; they wept bitterly, and prayed incessantly to the Almighty to enlighten the unhappy man, and move him to do penance. To leave nothing undone to make him return to the true Church, they also sent him a letter in which they represented to him the enormity of his crime, and the blindness that must have fallen upon him, when, in order not to lose the favor of a mortal monarch, he voluntarily forfeited the grace of the King of Kings, and feared the displeasure of a man more than that of the Almighty. In conclusion they said: "As thou hast faithlessly forsaken the true God, we renounce thee and all conversation with thee for ever. Say no more that thou belongest to us; for we do not wish either to hear of thee or ever again to see thee." While reading this letter, James was deeply touched, and tears rolled down his cheeks. "If my mother and my wife thus cast me from them, and will acknowledge me no longer," said he, with great emotion, "how then will God act, whom I have so greatly offended? And what will the grace of the king avail me, if I have an enemy in the Almighty?" Hardly had these words passed his lips, when such remorse for his sin oppressed his heart, that he cursed the hour in which he became faithless to his God. Having, on his knees, begged pardon of the Almighty, with streaming eyes, he declared publicly that he would rather lose the king's grace, his honors, and his possessions, nay, even his own life, than remain one moment longer in the guilt of idolatry. To all who came to him he confessed, without any hesitation, that he had done wrong, and desired now to live and die as a Christian. The king, who had been informed

of the change that had taken place in James, called him into his presence, and asked him if what had been reported was true. "Yes," answered the penitent man, "it is true; I did great wrong, when, to please you, I denied my God and abandoned the true faith. I repent of it from the depth of my heart, and detest my fault. I am a Christian, and desire to live and die as such." The king said everything that he thought would influence James not to return to the Christian religion, but when he saw that all was in vain, he threatened to torture him in an unprecedented manner. James, strengthened by the grace of God, said fearlessly: "No martyrdom can be thought of or invented that I am not willing to suffer, as well to atone for the sin of which I have been guilty, as also to manifest the love I bear in my heart towards the true God." Immediately was the order issued to cut one limb after the other from the dauntless confessor of Christ, in order that he might die a slow and painful death. The executioners fulfilled the order with indescribable cruelty. They first cut off one finger of his right hand, then the others one after another. Then they did the same with his left hand and with the toes of his feet. This done, they cut off one hand after the other; next, the arms and feet, and to make the torture still more unendurable, they were very slow and paused several times. The holy martyr was, however, undaunted, and raising his eyes towards heaven, prayed for the pardon of his sin and for strength to endure his suffering. He also exclaimed many times, with a loud voice, that he lived and died a Christian; until at last the sword ended his life and his terrible martyrdom. Many present were so deeply moved by the heroism of this follower of the Saviour, that they embraced the Christian faith.



The Roman Martyrology also commemorates to-day St. Virgil, Bishop of Salzburg, who was born in Ireland, of illustrious parents. He made so much progress in learning, by his unwearied industry, that he was accounted one of the best scholars of his time. Going to France, he was most graciously received by King Pepin, who kept him at Court for some time, and showed him great favor; but afterwards sent him to the Duke of Bavaria, who intended to honor him with the bishopric of Salzburg, in order to keep so wise and holy a man in his dominions. But Virgil, not less humble than learned, opposed the design of the duke with the greatest energy, until he was compelled by the prelates of the Church and the people to consent. No sooner, however, had he taken possession of the Episcopal chair than all

his thoughts and cares were directed towards showing his flock, by his example, the way that leads to heaven. Hence he preached almost daily to them, and admonished them with a father's love and solicitude, to conduct themselves according to the precepts of the Gospel; but, at the same time, endeavored to do himself all that he demanded of those whom he exhorted.

To further the honor of God and of the Saints, he built a magnificent church in memory of St. Rupert, the first apostle of Bavaria, and placed in it the relics of that Saint. The Duke of Carinthia, having heard of the apostolic zeal of our holy bishop, sent an embassy to request him most earnestly to come into his State, not only to convert the heathens, but also to animate the faithful to constancy and true devotion. Virgil first sent him some priests and deacons, and shortly after went to Carinthia himself, and did all that could be expected of a true apostle, so that he won the glorious name of Apostle of Carinthia. Having labored incessantly for twenty years, he returned to Saltzburg; and had no sooner arrived there than he became sick. Though his malady did not seem to be at all dangerous, yet he looked upon it as a messenger of death, and prepared himself most carefully for his last hour. He desired and received the holy sacraments with great devotion, and spent his last hours in the most fervent exercises of piety. His death took place in 785. At his shrine the blind recovered their sight, the deaf their hearing, and many sick persons were restored to their former health. A deacon, who doubted and despised the miracles that were wrought there, was immediately possessed by the Evil One, and long tormented, until going for refuge to the shrine of the Saint, he humbly prayed to be forgiven for his unbelief.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. Although St. James had long been a faithful follower of the true faith, and had not thought of leaving it, he nevertheless became an apostate to please the king. The same has been the case with many others. There are persons who, when they have refrained from sin for some time and have tried to serve God, imagine that they are steeled against all temptations, no longer in danger of offending God, and sure of salvation. The result of this is frequently that they venture too far into</p>	<p>danger and most disgracefully fall. May you, my reader, learn from the life of St. James, that no one should trust too much in himself or in his own strength, though he may have served God many years and avoided sin. So long as life lasts, we may daily fall and daily sin. "Though a man be ever so holy, he must never think himself sure of not falling," says St. Ephrem. St. Theodoret writes: "Say not to me: I have grown old in virtue, I fear not; for a fall must ever be feared." Satan</p>
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has drawn many who had grown gray in virtue, into the abyss of vice and damnation. St. Augustine writes that he had seen men who in their holiness seemed to have reached the stars, and yet fell so deeply into vice that they perished in it. Hence man should not trust too much in his own strength; but mindful of his weakness, he ought daily to pray to God for grace and help. Mistrust of one's self, trust in God, and daily prayer, are three things necessary to every human being. It was fortunate that St. James so soon came to the knowledge of his fault, that he repented of it, and atoned for it by a public confession, and by so heroically bearing his dreadful martyrdom. Oh! that all those would follow his example, who have come to a disgraceful fall, either by the temptation of Satan or by that of wicked men.

II. St. Virgil showed his flock the road to heaven, both by precepts and by example. Parents, masters, magistrates, preachers, pastors and confessors, are obliged to show the way to heaven to their children, domestics, and all those over whom they are placed or who look to them for instruction. The same every Christian owes, in a certain manner, to his neighbor. If this be done in words only, it will have little or no effect. The example must give strength to the words. We must practise ourselves the good to which we exhort others, and avoid that from which we endeavor to restrain them. We must walk ourselves in that way to heaven which we point out to others. In this manner, we can do much more good than by continual admonitions; "for," as St. Leo says, "examples are much more powerful than precepts." The lesson which we inculcate by good works goes deeper, and is of greater benefit, than that which we impart

by words only. "Therefore," says St. Gregory, "I know of no better advice than that you endeavor to teach your brother by your example, the good you desire him to learn." Among other good examples, by which St. Virgil showed others the road to heaven, was that, in his sickness, he himself asked to receive the Sacraments of penance, the Holy Eucharist and Extreme Unction. Elsewhere I have already told you that, when you are sick, you should not delay to receive the first two of these Sacraments. I will here make only a few remarks about the third. Extreme Unction is a Sacrament which the Saviour instituted for the salvation, comfort and strength of the sick. Those who receive it worthily, obtain, besides other graces, pardon for those sins, which they have, unknowingly, still on their conscience. They receive also particular grace to bear their pains patiently; they are strengthened against the temptations of Satan; and they are even restored to health, should this be conducive to their salvation. Should God visit you with a severe sickness, do not neglect to ask for so salutary a Sacrament, and receive it with great devotion. There are persons who fear to receive it, because they imagine that, after it, they will surely die; hence they will not receive it so long as they are conscious. How senseless, how absurd is this idea! It is nothing but a deceit of the devil! Do we not daily see that people recover after receiving Extreme Unction? This holy Sacrament has not been instituted to cause us to die sooner, but, on the contrary, one of the ends for which it has been instituted is to restore man to health, if his salvation requires it. Some ignorant people again imagine, that if God restores their health after Extreme Unction, they are no longer allowed to dance, or to put

their bare feet on the ground ; and hence they defer the Sacrament to the very last moment. Although it would doubtless be very beneficial for those who recover after receiving Extreme Unction, if they were no longer allowed to dance, yet it is not more forbidden to them, for that reason, than it is to those who have not been anointed ; while to touch the ground barefoot is not forbidden at all. Satan is the author of such thoughts, to prevent men from receiving this holy Sacrament ; because he knows how beneficial its effects are. Lend not your ear to Satan, but hesitate not, in any dangerous sickness, to ask, not only for the holy Communion, but also for Extreme Unction ; because when you receive it with devotion, while still in possession of all your mental faculties, you will derive much greater benefit from it. Should you have care of a sick person, see that

he receive this Sacrament in time, and, if necessary, instruct him that one who is about to be anointed, must not, knowingly, have any mortal sin on his conscience, and that if he is burdened with any such sin, he must confess it, if he is still able to do so. On the observance of this instruction, depends more than many imagine ; for, it may happen that a man, by not receiving the graces which Extreme Unction imparts, may go to eternal ruin, although the omission of Extreme Unction is in itself not a mortal sin. "Is any man sick among you ? let him bring in the priests of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil, in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and the Lord shall raise him up ; and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him." (James, v.)

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY OF NOVEMBER.

ST. JOSAPHAT, CONFESSOR, AND ST. BARLAAM, ANCHORITE.

Josaphat was the only son of a pagan king, named Abenner, who was a protector of idolatry and an arch-enemy of the Christians. Fearing that his son might become a convert to the Christian faith, and uproot idolatry in his kingdom, he erected an immense palace wherein the young prince was educated, without being allowed to put his foot outside the walls, so as to prevent the possibility of his hearing anything of the Christian religion. Those who served him were strictly forbidden to mention the faithful or their religion to him. Meanwhile the prince was instructed in several branches of knowledge and zealously kept to the worship of the false gods. The plurality of gods early became an object of distrust to the prince, and he often sought to discover the reason of his close confinement. One of the most confidential servants one day told him the cause of it, and thus greatly raised his curiosity to learn something of the Christian

faith, which his father thought so dangerous. A deep melancholy took possession of him, and when the king desired to know the cause of his sadness, Josaphat replied, without hesitation, that the cause was that others had the liberty to come to the palace and leave it again, while he was not allowed to put his foot outside the gates. The father, fearing to lose his son by an early death, allowed him to amuse himself outside the palace, but gave strict orders to his attendants to prevent any Christian from addressing him, and to keep out of his sight all beggars, and sick or deformed persons. Careful as the prince's attendants were to obey the king's command, still they could not prevent a few old and deformed persons from being among the crowd of people, whom curiosity to see the heir to the throne naturally attracted. Josaphat, from whom all the miseries of life, and all the infirmities of age had been kept secret, and whose eyes had never rested save on youth and health, desired to know what men those were, and why their aspect was so different from his. The answer he received gave him his first knowledge of the frailty of human nature, and impressed him with his first idea of death. This awakened in him an intense desire to obtain a master who could explain all this to him, and who could especially inform him of the principles of Christianity. God granted his wish. In the desert of Senaar lived a venerable and holy hermit, named Barlaam, to whom God revealed the prince's desire, with the command to go and instruct him in Christianity. Barlaam obeyed, came to India, and was announced to the prince as a merchant who had rare jewels to sell. He was admitted, desired to speak to the prince alone, and revealed to him the command he had received to bring him the precious treasure of the true faith. The prince, greatly rejoicing, was, without delay, instructed in the Christian religion, and a few days later received holy baptism. This event, however, soon became known, as the prince could not conceal his happiness after he was baptized. Barlaam would have been seized, but he had already fled. Araches, a courtier full of wiles and cunning, advised the king to order an old idolatrous priest, named Nachor, who was thoroughly instructed in the Christian faith, to pretend that he was Barlaam, and to dispute about the gospel, in the presence of the king and prince, with the most learned idolatrous priests. Nachor was to confess himself vanquished, acknowledge that he was wrong, and renounce the Christian faith. This would surely be an easy way to bring the prince back to the worship of the idols. The king was pleased with this plan, but God guided everything in such a manner that Nachor, who only pretended to confess Christianity, and who, according to the courtier's plan, was to be persuaded

by the arguments of the others to renounce it, became, on the contrary, convinced of its truth, defended it in earnest, and with his whole heart, and silenced all his opponents. He then informed the prince of the wicked design, became a zealous Christian, and retired into a desert, where he lived a holy life till his end. As the king had not succeeded in this plan, Theudas, a magician, proposed another still more wicked. Theudas advised him to give the prince none but women to wait on him, and among these a slave, who was by birth a royal princess, and was endowed with extraordinary beauty. All these persons were commanded to use every effort to spoil the young prince, so that, when he had lost his innocence, he would easily be brought to abandon the Christian faith. The father consented to use this wicked means, and Josaphat, until now so pure and chaste, was tormented day and night by Satan, and by those whom Satan used as his instruments. One day, when very near falling into the snares that were laid for him, a heavenly light suddenly illumined his head, so that, tearing himself from danger, he went into his room, prostrated himself upon the ground, and called on God for aid, until he was overtaken by sleep. In his dream, he saw a most beautiful garden on one side, and on the other, a horrible dungeon filled with flames, while he heard the words: "This is the dungeon for those who have soiled their souls with lust." He awoke and was so frightened and felt so great a disgust for all those who were tempting him to sin, that he became dangerously sick. The king hastened to him and wished to know the cause of this sudden illness. "You are the cause of it, my father;" said he, "you are killing me. If the Almighty had not graciously assisted me, I should have fallen into sin, and hence into eternal perdition." He added that he would rather lose his life than forsake Christianity. "If, therefore," he said, "you do not wish to become the murderer of your own child, free me from these attendants, and leave me unmolested in the practice of my faith." Although the father was pained by these words, he would not give way; but again called Theudas, who promised to change the prince's thoughts by his eloquence and witchcraft. He was brought to the prince, but the issue differed greatly from his expectations; for, although he used all his powers, he changed not the prince, but was himself so completely changed, that he not only renounced idolatry and magic, but thenceforward led a solitary life, occupied only with his salvation. When at length the king saw that his plans did not succeed, he came to the resolution no longer to torment the prince. To make him forget the trials through which he had passed, he gave him half his kingdom, with unrestricted power

to rule over it. Josaphat would have preferred to serve God in a desert; but the hope of introducing the Christian faith among his subjects made him accept his father's offer. And, in truth, Josaphat acted rather the apostle than the king in his dominions; for, with the aid of priests whom he invited for this purpose, he converted his subjects, founded several churches, and almost entirely abolished idolatry. Abenner, the king, at last desired to be instructed in the Christian faith, received baptism, and gave to Josaphat, who now was dearer to him than ever, the government of the entire land. He lived four years after his conversion, and closed his life peacefully in his son's arms. Josaphat remained several years longer at the head of the government, but afterwards resigned it in favor of a very wise and noble lord, called Barachius, who was also a pious Christian. He himself went into the desert to his beloved master, Barlaam, and led an austere and holy life, until God called him away. His holy body was brought back later, and buried in a church which he had founded. The Almighty, who had so wisely protected him during his life, made him glorious after his death by many miracles. His history is circumstantially related by St. John of Damascus.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Josaphat was interiorly tempted to sin by Satan, and exteriorly by unchaste slaves; but combating bravely, he conquered. Neither hell nor man can force you to sin. Fight valiantly; for man is strong when the grace of God sustains him. But in order to obtain this grace, he must pray as Josaphat did. Therefore, Christ Himself admonishes us: "Watch ye and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." (Matth. xxvi.) "When temptation assails us, let us cry to God for help," says St. Augustine. "If we do not wish to be conquered by Satan, we must fly for refuge to Him who vanquished hell." Hence, pray every morning, that the Lord may keep far from you all dangerous temptations, or if, in His wisdom, He permits them, to give you grace and strength to overcome them. When you are

tempted to do wrong during the day, turn immediately, with a short prayer, to the Almighty, and say with David: "O God, come to my assistance; O Lord make haste to help me." (Psalm lxix.) "Keep thou my soul and deliver me." (Psalm xxiv.) Or say with St. Peter, when, as he was walking on the water, he began to sink: "Lord save me." (Matth. xiv.)

II. St. Josaphat saw, in his sleep, hell and the torments of the unchaste, which awakened in him such abhorrence for the vice of unchastity, that every impure thought forever left him. Should unchaste thoughts torment you, descend with them immediately into hell, and consider the torments that there await the sinner. Think of the terrible fire, the horrible stench, the awful darkness, the tormenting hunger and thirst, and all the other

pains which its inhabitants suffer. Then say to yourself : In this dungeon so many thousands are burning in consequence of their debauchery. They are tormented here, during all eternity ; and I shall suffer as they do, without end, if I sin against chastity, and die in this sin. Shall I then, for a short and infamous pleasure, cast myself into this dreadful dungeon, and condemn myself for evermore ? The pleasure I seek is short and will soon

pass away ; but the torments are terrible that await me, and they last for ever. If you consider this seriously, it will be impossible for you to give ear to temptations and offend the Almighty. " If you are tempted to unchastity, think of the fire in hell," says St. Bernard. " When the fire of impurity commences to burn, oppose to it the fire of hell, and it will soon be extinguished," says St. Chrysostom.

TWENTY-NINTH DAY OF NOVEMBER.

ST. SATURNINE, MARTYR, OF ROME ; ST. SATURNINE, MARTYR, OF TOULOUSE ; ST. BILHILDIS, ABBESS.

We find, to-day, in the Roman Martyrology, two holy martyrs who both bear the name of Saturnine. The first of these lived at Rome, at the time of the emperors Dioclesian and Maximian. When it became known that he was a Christian, they condemned him to perform the hardest labor, although he was already far advanced in years, and enfeebled by age. The tyrants had perceived that, instead of destroying Christianity by tortures and death, they only strengthened it, as though the blood shed by the martyrs were seed from which constantly sprang up new and fervent worshippers of Christ. Hence a new manner had been adopted to torment the Christians, and thus induce them to abandon their faith. They were sent to work in the copper-mines, to cut stones, to carry sand, lime and other materials used in building, or to attend to the cattle, and do other menial work, without receiving anything for their sustenance but bread and water. Besides this, they were guarded by cruel overseers, who allowed them no rest during the day, and at night a very short one, while they whipped them like dumb brutes, and otherwise maltreated them. Such a fate the Christians had to endure, until they either expired or denied their faith. Satan, without doubt, was the inventor of this kind of martyrdom, as it seemed harder than any other, especially to those who were not accustomed to manual labor. Many, who had borne other torments fearlessly, became discouraged by the pressure of this new trial, and abandoned their faith. To this hard lot was the old and

feeble Saturnine condemned. He bore it with a happy heart, because he knew that he suffered for Christ's sake. One of the overseers gave him a certain amount of work, which was to be done at an appointed time, and as the venerable old man had not the strength to do it, he was maltreated most mercilessly, like a beast of burden. Sisinius, a pious deacon, who had been condemned to the same labor, had pity on the old man, and relieved him of a part of his work. Both showed themselves, notwithstanding their troubles and hardships, always cheerful, praising Him for whose sake they bore this cross. Their cheerfulness astonished the pagan officers; and when Dioclesian heard of it, he not only promised to release them from all work, but also to place them in high positions if they would consent to worship the idols. The two holy men indignantly rejected the offer. The emperor then gave them into the power of the prætor, Laodicius, that he might force them to obey. Laodicius cast both into a dungeon, and allowed them no nourishment. When they were famished with hunger and thirst, he called them into his presence, and finding them still as constant as before, he placed them on the rack, tore their limbs asunder, whipped them with scourges called scorpions, burned their wounded bodies with torches, and, finally, ordered them to be beheaded. During these dreadful and manifold torments, not a word passed their lips, except to praise the Lord. They sang, rejoicing in their pains: "Praise, honor, and thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, that Thou hast made us worthy to partake of Thy sufferings." These, and similar words, they repeated as long as they lived. Many of the heathens, seeing the constancy of these holy martyrs, became converted to the true faith.



The second St. Saturnine, who is commemorated to-day in the Roman Martyrology, received the crown of martyrdom at Toulouse, in France, where he had converted many thousands of heathens by his preaching and miracles. The heathens seized him, and casting him down from the Capitol, which was built like that of Rome, into a precipice, where his whole body was crushed to pieces. It is written of him that the idols always became silent in his presence. Hence, when ordered to worship them, lest their wrath should destroy him, he said, derisively: "Your gods are afraid of me, and cannot say a word in my presence; why, then, should I fear their anger? or how can they revenge themselves on me?"



To the life of these two holy martyrs, I will add that of the Abbess St. Bilhildes, who died on the 27th of this month. She was born in Franconia in the year 625, at Hochheim, now called Veitshochheim, in honor of its holy patron, St. Vitus. Her parents, Iberimus and Mathilda, were Christians, though paganism still prevailed in their country, and were near relations of King Dagobert I., who reigned at that period. When three years old Bilhildes was sent to Wurzburg to her aunt, Cunegundes, who instructed her in the Christian religion, and had her name inscribed among those who were to be baptized; but before the sacrament could be administered, the wild Huns invaded and devastated the country. The priests were banished or murdered, and the light of the faith was almost entirely extinguished. In this manner the baptism of Bilhildes was omitted, and afterwards entirely forgotten, but without any fault of hers, as she did not doubt that she had been baptized. Bilhildes returned to her parents when peace was restored to the land; and as she grew in years, so also did she grow in virtue and piety. She had a special hatred for impurity; hence she was solicitous that certain pagan dances, which at that period were in fashion, and gave occasion for many vices, should be interdicted by King Dagobert.

When in her sixteenth year, she became, by the command of her parents, the wife of Hettan, Duke of Franconia. Nothing could be more painful to her than this union; for Hettan was yet in the blindness of paganism. She consented, at last, in the hope that she might draw Hettan to Christ, and that his example might convert the whole nation. Her sufferings, during the years of her marriage, cannot be imagined. She led a holy life; occupied many hours, day and night, in prayer; chastised her body with manifold penances, and offered all to the Almighty for the conversion of the duke, whom she also endeavored to persuade of the truth of Christianity, by kind but earnest words. But all was in vain, and hence she at last begged the Almighty to sever the ties that bound her to Hettan. This prayer was heard. Hettan, by royal command, was called to the field, and Bilhildes returned to her mother at Hochheim; but afterwards, fleeing from home, she went to her cousin Siegebert, at Mayence, where she lived unknown to the world.

Having received news of her husband's death, she gave herself entirely to the service of God and to works of charity. With the nobles who visited her, she spoke of nothing but God and divine things; of the vanity of all temporal honors and joys; of

eternal pain and eternal happiness. Add to this her own virtuous life, and it is easy to imagine how much good she did. But she aimed still higher, and resolved not only to consecrate her own person entirely to the service of the Almighty, but to give others an opportunity to do likewise. To this end she founded, out of her own means, a large convent, which, in our time, is called Old Munster. Into this house she retired, with several others who had resolved to quit the world. The holy life she led, her kindness to those in her charge, and the high perfection they attained under her guidance, cannot be told in few words. Some years later, while three of her religious, who, for their great virtues were universally esteemed, were saying their prayers, an Angel appeared to each, revealed to them that Bilhildes, their abbess, had neither been baptized nor confirmed, and bade them make this known to her. Although they at first hesitated to do so, as the vision might have been a delusion of Satan, they finally told Bilhildes what had been said to them. The pious abbess was at first unwilling to believe this revelation, as she knew that she had been born of pious Christian parents, who could not have neglected a thing of such vital importance. She, however, consulted the bishop on the subject; and he, in order to ascertain the truth, prescribed public prayers, as no other means was left him. He himself said Mass for this intention; and the Lord revealed to him, during the holy sacrifice, the same that the Angel had announced to the three religious. He therefore made immediate preparation for administering both sacraments to the Abbess, who received them with deep devotion, and was afterwards still more zealous in the practice of virtue. At length, God revealed to her that her end was approaching, and she prepared herself most carefully to leave this world. She allowed no worldly persons to visit her during the last few days of her life, saying: "I must now think only of God and the day of judgment." She called all the religious of her convent to her side, on her last day, and exhorted them to persevere in the love of God, and in the strict observance of the rule of their Order. After this, she gave herself up to devotional exercises. At the ninth hour, on the 27th day of November, she cried out with a loud voice: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit," and closed her eyes in death. The many miracles which were wrought through her intercession, after her death, proved to the world that she lives in the joys of the Blessed.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Saturnine accepted the hard work allotted to him with cheerfulness, and performed it as well as he could, without manifesting sadness or impatience; he even praised the Almighty while he labored. God, who has created man for work, has also ordained that each station should have its own task. He graciously promises to recompense this work in the other world, if it is done rightly. Those do very wrong, who neglect what their station requires of them, and who are slaves to idleness. Those also do wrong, who become impatient with their work or even curse it. They lose their merit and the reward which they would have earned, had they performed their work with due patience. Should your task be burdensome, cheer yourself, after the example of St. Saturnine, and call on God for aid.

II. St. Bilhildes had no reason to doubt that she had been baptized, and yet she had not received the holy Sacrament of baptism. God revealed it to her and she performed her obligations. Those who are born of good Catholic parents have generally no reason to doubt their baptism; nevertheless, no one has the infallible certainty that he has been rightly baptized. Although we have no reason to trouble ourselves on this account, yet it is very wise to secure ourselves by the baptism of desire. This consists in arousing in our hearts a most

fervent love of God, or a perfect contrition for our sins, with the firm purpose of keeping the commandments of the Lord; and, at the same time, awakening in our hearts the desire to receive holy baptism, if we had not been baptized. We ought also sometimes, especially on the anniversary of our baptism, to renew the promises we made at that time to serve, not Satan, but God, and to keep His laws. In this manner, we may repair any fault that may have been committed at our baptism. Persons who were not born of Catholic parents, ought to inquire, when they are converted, about the manner in which baptism is administered in the place where they were born and christened; for, experience has taught that Protestants, either do not use natural water, or change the prescribed words, in which cases, baptism is certainly not valid. Should such persons find reason to doubt the validity of their baptism, they should consult a prudent confessor, who will generally recommend the repetition of baptism under condition. The example of St. Bilhildes teaches us to pray frequently that God would give us knowledge of what we do not know, and what may yet be necessary for our salvation. "Make known unto me the way wherein I should walk. Teach me to do thy will." (Ps. cxlii.) "O Lord, make me know my end, that I may know what is wanting to me." (Ps. xxxviii.)

THIRTIETH DAY OF NOVEMBER.

ST. ANDREW, APOSTLE.

The holy Apostle, St. Andrew, born at Bethsaida, in Galilee, was a brother of St. Peter, and at first a disciple of St. John the Baptist. He was the first of the Apostles who had the happiness of knowing Christ, the true Messiah; for, one day, when Andrew and another disciple were standing with their master on the banks of the Jordan, St. John, pointing to Jesus, who was approaching, said: "Behold the Lamb of God!" No sooner had Andrew heard these words, than he and the other disciple followed Christ, and remained with Him that day. On the following day, meeting his brother, Simon, afterwards called Peter, he said to him: "We have found the Messiah," and brought him to Christ. Not long after this, when Andrew and Peter were casting their nets into the Sea of Galilee, Christ called them, and said: "Come after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men!" Immediately leaving their nets, they followed Him. From that moment, Andrew left the Lord no more, except at the time when He was seized in the Garden of Gethsemane, by the Jews, when he fled like the other disciples. He was present when Christ, after His resurrection, appeared to His disciples; when He ascended into heaven in their presence, and when He sent the Holy Ghost from heaven upon them. When the Apostles separated, and went into the different countries of the world, to preach the Gospel of Christ to all nations, Andrew travelled into Scythia, Thrace, Galatia and other Pagan countries, where he converted many thousands by his sermons, and by the miracles he performed. At last he came to Patræ, the capital of Achaia, in Greece, and there, too, preached, with apostolic freedom, the Word of the Lord, and approved it by many miracles, which induced a great number of the inhabitants to embrace Christianity. Ægeas, the governor, resisted him with all his might, and endeavored to defend idolatry. The holy Apostle, however, reprovèd him fearlessly, and said: "You desire that this people should recognize you as their judge; why, then, do you refuse to recognize Christ, the true God, as the Judge of all mankind; and why do you refuse to turn your heart from idolatry?" "Be silent!" replied Ægeas, "and speak not to me of your Christ. Was he not nailed by the Jews to a cross? How then can he be a true God? How can I worship him as God?" Andrew endeavored to explain the great mystery of the Redemption of the human race, and to show how Christ had, voluntarily,

and for love of man, died the ignominious death of the cross; but Ægeas would not listen, and, interrupting him, commanded him immediately to sacrifice to the gods, or to prepare himself for a most cruel martyrdom. Andrew replied: "I offer daily, on the Altar, to the Almighty, who is the only true God, not the flesh of oxen, nor the blood of goats, but an unspotted Lamb, which, when the entire multitude of the faithful have partaken of its flesh, remains entire and living." The governor, full of wrath, ordered Andrew to be cast into a dungeon; but the people, who loved the Saint as a father, rose against the governor, and ran in crowds to the dungeon, determined to set the prisoner free. But the Apostle besought them to be quiet, and not seek to prevent him from receiving the crown of martyrdom, which he had so long desired. The following day, St. Andrew was brought before the governor, who offered him the greatest honors, if he would consent to sacrifice to the gods; but threatened him with the most cruel torments, if he persisted in refusing. The Saint said fearlessly: "The honors you offer me have no value in my eyes, because they are temporal and pass away; the tortures you threaten me with, I despise, for the same reason; but you, O Ægeas! have to fear torments which last for ever, if you do not abandon your idols, and recognize Jesus Christ for the true and only God, and worship Him as such." After these words, the Saint continued to preach to the governor, and to all present, of the crucified Lord, and of the happiness of all those who suffer for Him. Ægeas, enraged at the Apostle's fearlessness, ordered him to be most cruelly scourged, and then to be crucified, in order to make him resemble his God. This was meant by the governor in derision; but no manner of death could have been more welcome to St. Andrew. The cruel and unjust sentence was received with murmurs by the people, of whom some were heard saying aloud: "This man is just, and a friend of God: why must he be crucified?" Andrew, addressing the people again, begged them not to deprive him of what he looked upon as an inestimable happiness. When he was led to the place of execution, and saw the cross on which he was to die, he cried out joyfully: "O precious cross, which I have so long desired, so truly loved, so ceaselessly sought; at last I find thee prepared to receive me. Take me away from the world, and unite me again with my Lord, that He who has redeemed me on thee, may again receive me by thee." Thus cried the Saint from afar; but when he reached the cross, he embraced and kissed it, and gave himself willingly to the executioners, who bound him to it. No sooner had the cross been raised, than it served as a pulpit to the holy Apostle, and he exhorted the

Christians to remain firm in their holy faith, and the heathens to convert themselves to the only true God. He explained the nothingness of the idols, and the truth of the Christian religion. For two days he lived and preached, hanging on the cross. The people began again to murmur against the governor, and desired to have the Saint taken down from the cross; but the holy martyr desired to be permitted to die upon it, as he esteemed death a priceless grace. On the third day, when the people seemed determined to rescue him by force, he called to his Saviour: "Do not permit, O Lord, that Thy servant, who, according to his own wish, hangs on the cross, be taken down from it; but do Thou take me from it to Thee, O my beloved Master, Jesus Christ, whom I have confessed and always loved, and whom, still confessing, I long to see. Take, O Lord Jesus, my spirit to Thee. I ardently desire to be united with Thee." During this prayer, a bright light streamed from heaven, and rested upon the Saint, whilst he breathed his last. The martyrdom of St. Andrew happened in the year of Our Lord 62, or, according to others, in 70.

His holy body was transported to Constantinople in the time of Constantine the Great; but was afterwards brought to Rome, where it has its resting-place in the Church of St. Peter.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Impress two memorable sayings of the holy Apostle deep into your heart. The first is: "I sacrifice daily to Almighty God, &c." This is a glorious proof to you that the Apostles performed the holy Sacrifice of Mass; for to this alone can the words of St. Andrew have reference. Conclude, therefore, from this, that it is false for the heretics to say that the first Christians knew nothing of Mass. Did not St. Andrew live during the first years of Christianity? Be not confused by the lies of the heretics; but believe that Christ instituted the holy Sacrifice of the Mass at His Last Supper. The second memorable saying of the Apostle is: "The honors you offer me have no value in my eyes, because they are temporal and pass away; your tortures I despise for the same reason."

Consider it well. All temporal honors, all joys, pass away quickly. How foolish is it, therefore, to love them immoderately, and to forfeit for them the eternal honors, riches and joys! No pain or trial on this earth lasts for ever; but those which await the sinner in the other world, are endless. Should we not, therefore, do and suffer here so as to escape torments hereafter?

II. St. Andrew manifested great joy on beholding the cross that had been prepared for him; he greeted it warmly, and embraced it lovingly. He wished not to be released from it, but prayed to be allowed to die on it. You are not bound to a cross of wood like St. Andrew, but the All-Wise sometimes lays a cross of suffering upon you, because He wishes to prepare you for heaven. How do you re-

gard your cross? How do you carry it? I fear to ask you how you greeted, embraced and kissed it. Perhaps you have carried it, as Simon of Cyrene carried the Cross of the Lord, because you were forced, and could not help yourself. You have suffered only because you were obliged. You suffer murmuringly and complainingly, and perhaps even endeavor to free yourself from your cross by improper means. Oh! how differently did St. Andrew act. He esteemed himself happy, because he could die on the cross like his Saviour, and because he had heard, from the lips of Christ, that the way of the Cross is the surest road to eternal life. You know all this; but you do not think

seriously enough of it. In future, keep these truths before your eyes: first, the way of the Cross is the way to heaven; secondly, Christ died on the Cross for love of me. Whoever rightly considers these two points, will in his sufferings, not give way to resentment, murmurs or complaints, but will bear them if not cheerfully, at least patiently. Hence St. Paul admonishes us, saying: "For, think diligently upon him that endured such opposition from sinners against himself, that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds." (Heb. xii.)

Notice. The month ends to-day. Do not forget the advice I gave you elsewhere.

FIRST DAY OF DECEMBER.

ST. ELIGIUS, BISHOP OF NOYON.

St. Eligius, first a diligent and honest artist, afterwards a pious courtier, and finally a holy bishop, was born in Aquitain, about the year 588, of virtuous, though neither rich nor distinguished parents. Having in his youth studied the liberal arts with great success, he afterwards showed a strong desire and wonderful aptitude for the trade of goldsmith, and became so skilful in it, that he was accounted one of the best workmen of his time. Piety, which, according to the words of the apostle, is useful for all things, inspired his taste. He daily assisted at holy Mass, although he was sometimes overburdened with work. The Sundays and holydays he devoted entirely to the service of the Lord and the salvation of his soul. He was an enemy to all gaming, dancing and other frivolous pastimes. His savings he gave to the poor. On account of his pious conduct, and the strictness with which he observed all Christian duties, he was generally called "the religious in the world." At Paris, his virtues and skill made him known at court: and as king Clothaire II. desired to have a throne of gold richly adorned with precious jewels, Bobo, the treasurer, selected Eligius for this work and gave him as much gold and jewels as he thought were needed. The Saint, however, made, out of the materials given to him, two thrones, which so pleased the king, that he kept Eligius at court. There are still extant several pictures of Saints made by this holy artist. Eligius was in high favor with the king on account of the master-pieces of art which he produced, but he remained humble and pious, and, without participating in the enjoyments of the court, he employed the time left him after his work in prayer, devout reading and meditation. Besides this, he chastised his body with fasting, watching, wearing rough hair-shirts, and by other penances. All his income was spent for the greater honor of God and the comfort of the poor, to whom he often gave the clothes he wore. Dagobert, the successor of Clothaire, who esteemed Eligius as highly as his predecessor had done, presented him with an estate near Limoges, and a beautiful house in Paris. The holy man converted this house into a convent of nuns, while, on the estate,

he erected another religious house for men. He also had a church built in Paris, in honor of St. Paul. When he found that in measuring the place which had been given him for his abbey, he had taken one foot more than was granted by the royal patent, the Saint was greatly distressed, and casting himself at the feet of the king he asked pardon, and declared that he would not keep that foot of land against the wish of his royal benefactor. Such unusual honesty pleased the king extremely. Equally admirable was the Saint's solicitude to avoid an unnecessary oath; for, when required to swear fidelity to the king, on the relics of the Saints, he refused to do so, and said: "God forbids me to take an oath without sufficient reason; He, however, commands me to serve your Majesty faithfully, and this ought to assure you of my unceasing fidelity." In all respects, the holy man lived so retired a life at court, that he was called the holy courtier, or the Religious of the Court.

God, however, had destined him to become a Bishop of the Church. The clergy, as well as the people of Noyon and Tournay waited on Clovis II., after the death of their bishop, and requested him to appoint Eligius to the vacant see. The king cheerfully consented; but Eligius refused as long as he could; at last, however, he had to obey the voice of God, and was consecrated bishop at Rouen. He remained the same humble man, as before, changing nothing in his penitential life, and retaining all his kindness to the poor. The slight faults he had committed in his younger years, he endeavored to atone for by severe penances, and his zeal redeemed all past negligences. His doors were ever open to the poor and needy, who thus enjoyed the greatest part of his episcopal revenue. Twelve poor persons dined daily at his table, and he himself offered water to wash their hands before the meal and waited on them at table. He visited on foot all the churches in his diocese, endeavoring to abolish the abuses that had crept in, and to lead his flock in the path of a truly Christian life. One day, he preached in a village not far from Noyon, against the frivolities of dancing. To annoy the bishop, some young men immediately went into a certain house and began to dance. The Saint going to the place, spoke earnestly to them and admonished them not to indulge in so dangerous a pastime. But seeing that they laughed at his words, he was roused to just wrath, and prayed to God that they might be punished in their bodies for the salvation of their souls. And behold! fifty of them were immediately possessed by the Evil One, who tormented them frightfully for a whole year, when they were freed by the prayers of the Saint.

When the holy man had regulated his own diocese, he ven-

tured into other lands to the extreme end of Brabant, where he found a great many heathens, all of whom he brought to a knowledge of the true God. He is, therefore, called the Apostle of Flanders and Brabant. During these apostolic excursions for the conversion of the heathens, St. Eligius wrought many miracles, as he had also done before, even whilst still holding a worldly position at the court of France. He founded many convents, both in his diocese and in other places, in order to cement the Christian faith with Christian conduct. At last he sank under the many fatigues and hardships and the great labors he had undergone for the honor of the Lord and the salvation of mankind, and ended his holy life, in the 70th year of his age, by a happy death. At his tomb the blind recovered their sight, the deaf, their hearing, the lame walked, and the sick regained their lost health. It is especially remarkable that all those who dared to take a false oath at his tomb, were immediately possessed by the devil or died a sudden death.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Eligius lived piously as an artist in his workshop ; piously at court ; piously in his dignity as bishop : a proof that we can live piously and save our souls in all stations and places. Those belonging to the higher classes may read how St. Eligius conducted himself at court ; how he allowed no vain amusements to fascinate him nor to disturb him in his devotion ; how he employed his leisure in prayer and devout reading ; how austere he was to himself, how compassionate to the poor. Follow his example in these and other points, and you will live piously and gain salvation. Artists, artisans, day-laborers, and all who earn their subsistence by the work of their hands, should read carefully the regulations which Eligius observed, and follow in his footsteps in order that they also may live piously in their station and thus earn life everlasting. Especially ought they to consider how faithful the holy man was in doing his work, and in the use of the precious materials

entrusted to him. There are many who retain a considerable portion of what is entrusted to them, and they pretend to have no scruple about it. They say that this is a custom, that others do the same : that what they retain is a trifle and of no value. Let them know that this is a sinful custom, and that its being a custom does not make it less a sin. To appropriate the remnants of materials is in truth nothing but a theft, which is forbidden as well by divine as by human laws. It is true that if what is retained is only a trifle, the theft is small ; but whoever commits many small thefts, may commit mortal sin ; as a servant, who daily purloins only one cent, in time becomes guilty of great sin. To say that those from whom you take do not perceive it, or do not suffer by it, is not an honest way of speaking, and not at all a proof that such purloining is allowed. The Almighty sees it, though man perceives it not. If they whom you thus wrong, suffer no perceptible

loss by your dishonesty, you still act against their wishes, when you retain anything of what they gave you to use for them; and therefore, you are a thief. I am convinced that many make themselves temporally and eternally miserable by such dishonesty. May those whom it concerns take heed that they do not experience this to their own great sorrow. To deceive or to steal does not bring God's blessing, but draws temporal and eternal misery after it. "The unjust shall not possess the Kingdom of God," says the Apostle. (I. Cor. vi.)

II. St. Eligius wept bitterly over the faults of his youth, and endeavored to atone for them by severe penances. At the same time, he was zealous to redeem his past omissions by the exercise of good works. To-day begins the last month of the year. I do not doubt that you have been guilty of more sins in your past life, and that you have been more negligent in the service of God, than St. Eligius. Therefore, endeavor to repent daily, with your whole heart, during this month, and to atone for your sins, by penance. Offer to the Almighty, in atonement, all that you may have to suffer during this month, all the good you may do, in union with the good that will be done in the entire Christian world, and above all, in union with all that our dear Saviour has done and suffered for our sake. Manifest a continual zeal in the exercise of good works during this month, in order that you may repair what you have neglected in the other months. Give more time to prayer, to devout reading, to hearing the word of God, and to other pious deeds. Be more liberal to the poor, stricter in the observance of the fasts and other mortifications of the body; in one word, be most earnestly solici-

tous for your salvation. This month is the beautiful and holy season of Advent. Who knows whether it is not the last Advent for you? After the Patriarch Jacob had served Laban for many long years, he said: "It is reasonable, therefore, that I should now provide also for my own house." You have, during the year, occupied yourself enough with temporal cares, with work and trouble for others, or for your own body, for your own temporal welfare. Is it not reasonable, then, that you should, at least in this month, commence to work for the salvation of your own soul? Is it not necessary, that you should employ diligently every moment, and thus redeem what until now you have neglected? "See, therefore, brethren," admonishes St. Paul, "how you walk circumspectly; not as unwise, but as wise, redeeming the time." (Ephes. v.) He wishes to say: redeem what you have neglected; "for," as he elsewhere says, "time is short." Perhaps before this year is over you will be called before the judgment-seat of the Almighty. How will you render your account to Him, if you do not earnestly do penance? "Before the judgment," says the Wise Man "prepare the justice, and thou shalt find mercy in the sight of God." (Eccles. xviii.) "How many," writes St. Bernard, "how many die to-day, who if they had this one hour which you have, would do all in their power to obtain pardon for their sins!"

In conclusion, let the lovers of frivolous dancing see, by the punishment which God sent to the indecent dancers of whom we spoke above, if this amusement is as innocent and blameless as the people of our day imagine. More I need not say.

SECOND DAY OF DECEMBER.

ST. BIBIANA, VIRGIN AND MARTYR, AND ST. SABAS, ABBOT AND
CONFESSOR.

In the fourth century, there lived at Rome a virgin celebrated among the Christians for her beauty and her modesty, named Bibiana. Flavian, her father, was, in the reign of the godless Emperor Julian, dispossessed of all his honors and banished from his country on account of his faith. He ended his life in misery, a true martyr for Christ's sake. Dafrosa, her mother, was for the same reason, after her husband's banishment, locked up in her own house, that she might starve. Bibiana and Demetria, the two daughters, shared their mother's imprisonment. But as neither the mother nor her daughters became emaciated by the hunger they suffered, and, on the contrary, appeared more vigorous than before, and could not be frightened into denying Christ, the mother, by the order of the governor Apronianus, was banished from the country and then beheaded. Bibiana and Demetria were, at the same time, deprived of all their possessions, in the hope that poverty would cause them to abandon their faith. But the Christian heroines regarded it as little as those to whom St. Paul writes: "You have received the loss of your possessions joyfully, because you know that you have to expect greater goods in heaven." They said cheerfully: "It is better to lose the temporal goods, which we cannot possess long, than the eternal." The Governor, after a time, called both of them, and promised that all that had been taken from them would be restored, if they would only worship the gods; but if they refused, he threatened them with imprisonment, a cruel martyrdom and the most painful death. The Christian virgins were as unmoved by the flatteries and promises of the tyrant, as by his menaces. "We worship the true God," said Bibiana, "and are ready to die rather than to stain our souls by sacrificing to the gods." Demetria spoke in the same manner, but hardly had the words left her lips, when she sank down and expired. Bibiana was given into the charge of a wicked and cunning woman, named Rufina, who was to cause her to abandon her faith; for, the heathens knew, by experience, that none more easily denied Christ than those who had lost their purity. Rufina, the wicked woman, left nothing untried. She represented the pleasures of the world to Bibiana in such a manner, that she thought the virgin would surely drink the poison thus put to her lips; but all her wiles were of no effect. Although the maiden was kept like a prisoner by Rufina and could not

escape, yet she remained unharmed by the fire of temptation. Calling ceaselessly to God for aid and strength, she was so graciously sustained, that she not only manifested not the least pleasure at Rufina's wicked behavior, but was more and more strengthened in virtue. Rufina, enraged at this, maltreated the innocent virgin by beating her most violently. All that her rage suggested was employed to gain her end; but the virgin, upheld by the Almighty, remained true to her resolution, rather to lose her life by the most cruel martyrdom, than to stain her purity.

When, at length, Rufina saw to her great chagrin that her endeavors were entirely useless, she informed the tyrant Apro-nianus of her failure, and persuaded him immediately to sentence Bibiana to death. The tyrant, without delay, ordered her to be tied to a column, and beaten to death. The order was executed, and Bibiana repeatedly declared that she regarded it as a high honor to be thought worthy to die for Christ's sake. With her eyes raised to heaven, she stood motionless during her martyrdom, until her whole body was one mass of bloody wounds, and she gave her unspotted soul to the keeping of her heavenly Bridegroom. According to the tyrant's command, her holy body was left on the public road, to serve as a prey to the dogs; but it remained untouched, until a pious priest carried it secretly away, and buried it beside the grave of her mother and sister. At present there stands a beautiful church on the spot, built in honor of the holy martyr, and in commemoration of the sufferings and death of her mother and sister.



To the short life of St. Bibiana, we will add a few words about the Abbot St. Sabas, who is also commemorated in this month. St. Sabas was born in Cappadocia, in the district of Cæsarea. When hardly five years of age, he was given into the care of his uncle, Hermes, as his parents were obliged to be absent from home for several years. After some years, Sabas, disgusted with the world, in which he saw nothing but selfishness and avarice, went into a monastery, where he served the Lord during ten years with great zeal. At the expiration of this time, he went, with the permission of his superior, to Jerusalem to visit the holy places and the cloisters of the hermits of Palestine. The most renowned of these, at that period, was that of which St. Euthymius was superior. Sabas, desiring to reach the highest degree of spiritual perfection, begged to be received into it, and his wish was fulfilled. His conduct while

there was so exemplary, that it served as a mirror to all the other religious. He was the first and most fervent at prayers; the most industrious at work; the quickest in obedience; the most severe in chastising his body, and the most edifying in all his actions. His superior sent him, after some time, to Alexandria, where his parents resided; but when he perceived that they desired to retain him, he escaped secretly and returned into the monastery. He left it again, however, soon after, and retired into a solitary cave, where he lived five years in still greater austerity than before. By the inspiration of the Almighty who had chosen him as an instructor for many others, he then selected another solitude, where he dwelt with several others who desired to live under his guidance. God sent him, through kind-hearted people, so much money, that he was enabled to build a large monastery, which, in a short time, was occupied by 150 monks. Scarcely was this monastery finished, when he found it necessary to build another, which was, in the course of time, followed by five more, so rapidly did the number of his disciples increase. The miracles he wrought by divine aid, and the holy life he led, spread his fame over all Christendom. Hence, when the Emperor Anastasius most barbarously persecuted the Catholics in the East, the patriarch of Jerusalem requested our holy abbot to go, with some pious hermits, to Constantinople and endeavor to prevent the emperor from further cruelties. Sabas, although already 70 years old, cheerfully undertook this fatiguing journey. When he arrived at Constantinople, he entered the imperial hall, and Anastasius saw a bright Angel walking before the Saint. Awe-struck at this, he hastily rose from his throne, and going to meet Sabas, received him with every mark of courtesy, listened to him most respectfully, and granted him all he asked.

At that time the city was ravaged by a most terrible famine and by many contagious diseases, but notwithstanding this, the inhabitants were miserably oppressed by fresh imposts. Sabas, pitying them, represented to the emperor the general distress, and exhorted him to abolish the new taxes. The emperor granted his request immediately, but Marinus, the chief treasurer, resisted, and advised the king not to alter the laws. The Saint menaced Marinus with divine punishment, in case he refused to retract his wicked advice. Marinus did not heed the menace, and soon experienced the wrath of God; for, the oppressed people revolted, made an attack upon his house and set fire to it. He would doubtless have lost his life, had he not saved himself by flight. This occurrence brought the emperor to relinquish his purpose; and St. Sabas was so beloved by the

inhabitants of the city, that they paid him all honor as to their greatest benefactor. To escape from this, the holy man hastened to leave the city, and reached his solitude in safety, where he continued in the exercise of good works, until the 89th year of his life, when, at the request of the Patriarch of Jerusalem, he made a second journey to Constantinople. His mission was to ask the assistance of the emperor against the Samaritans who had invaded Palestine and persecuted the Christians. The emperor Justinian, who had heard much of the holiness of St. Sabas, requested the patriarch of the city to bring the Abbot to the palace. When the Saint entered, the emperor saw a bright crown on his head, and rising to receive him, embraced him most warmly, and not only promised him the required aid, but immediately issued the necessary orders to the imperial officers in Palestine. During the audience, the clock struck three, the hour at which the Saint was wont to recite a portion of his daily prayers. He, therefore, went out to pray, and when told that it was not becoming to leave at the very moment when the emperor was occupied in granting a petition, the Saint replied: "The Emperor does his duty, and I do mine." After the Saint's requests had all been granted, he returned to Jerusalem, and thence to his beloved solitude, where, with increasing years, he increased in holiness. In 531, he ended his holy life by a happy death, in the 92d year of his age. The many miracles which were performed at his intercession, were evidence of the happy life he had commenced in heaven.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The danger in which St. Bibiana found herself, was great beyond expression, and the more so, because it lasted for a long time. Yet the chaste virgin committed no sin, because she was in danger without her consent, and could not save herself by flight. She did all in her power to guard herself against sinning, and God gave her His especial aid. It must ever afford great consolation to those who against their will, are exposed to great danger, and who are unable to escape, that God will surely assist them, when, like St. Bibiana, they do all in their power to help themselves. Such help, however,

cannot reasonably be expected by those who imprudently cast themselves into danger of sin, or who voluntarily remain in it. "Divine assistance will surely be given us, if we do not neglect to do all that is in our power," says St. James of Nisibis. Many persons, however, will not do this, but clearly show that it is not their earnest wish to avoid sin, since they do not employ the necessary means. And for the same reason, they are in danger of going to eternal ruin. Why? Take the following words well to heart. To gain heaven, nothing is so necessary as a truly sorrowful confession. It is, however, neces-

sary for such a confession, that, besides contrition, we make the earnest resolution not only to avoid sin, but also every opportunity that may lead to it. When this resolution does not exist, confession is invalid and sacrilegious. We obtain by it not only no pardon for our sins, but we commit another and a great sin. If we go to holy communion after such a confession, we become again guilty of a great sin, and by continuing thus to confess and partake of holy communion, perhaps for months or years, we desecrate the holy Sacraments, and cast ourselves still deeper into hell. Oh ! that all whom it concerns may take this terrible but true article of faith to heart, especially those who do not endeavor to free their houses from all occasions to sin ; who keep up a sinful friendship ; who do not shun the house where they have so often offended the Lord ; as also those who voluntarily remain in a place where they are almost daily in imminent danger of sin. Such people perhaps go frequently to confession and not seldom to holy communion, but unworthily ; because they have not made, in their confession, the earnest resolution to shun the occasion of sin. Their repentance is not true, but useless and hypocritical. "To avoid all occasion of sin, is the sign of true repentance," writes St. Bernard. And St. Isidore says : "It belongs to true repentance, to avoid all opportunity to sin." Again he says : "He that does not shun all opportunity of evil, does not entirely free himself from sin."

II. The entire life of St. Sabas was a continual exercise of good works. The same may be said of a great many other Saints. To understand this, and to follow St. Sabas, it is necessary to know that there are two kinds of good works : the first are those which are com-

manded by God or by the Church ; the second, those which are not expressly commanded, but recommended as very agreeable to the Lord. The latter are called voluntary good works. The Saints have always endeavored not only to perform those good deeds which are expressly commanded, but also such as are not commanded. All good Christians should do likewise. They should serve the Lord, not like slaves, but like children. A slave does nothing but what is commanded him, and that only for fear of punishment. An affectionate son does not only that which his father commands, but also what he knows is agreeable to his father, although it has not been expressly commanded ; because he loves his father. For he that loves, does everything that he knows is agreeable to the beloved. In this manner our divine Lord acted towards His heavenly Father, as He Himself says : "For I do always the things that please him." (John, viii.) Thus also did the Saints act, because they endeavored to be true children of God. Hence we find so much in their lives of voluntary fasts and abstinences, of long prayers at night, of frequent visits to the churches, of reading devout books, of practising divers penances, of avoiding entertainments in themselves not sinful, of leaving all temporal goods, of their flight to convents and into deserts, and of continual mortification in eating, drinking, sleeping, talking, seeing, hearing, and bearing heat and cold. If you wish to be a true child of God, follow Christ and His Saints. Before all things, practise those good works which are commanded, and then also those which are not commanded, but which are agreeable to your God. You daily have opportunities to do this ; make use of them. Make to-day the res-

olation which the holy king David made, who practised many good works which were voluntary. Thus, for instance, during the day, he prayed seven times ; he rose in the middle of the night to praise the Lord ; wept bitterly over his sins every day ; fasted most austereley ; wore a rough hair-shirt and ab- stained from refreshing himself with a draught of water, which had been offered him when very thirsty. " I will voluntarily sacrifice to thee." (Psalm lxxvii.) This was his resolution, which he faithfully kept. " I will sacrifice to thee of my own accord, and praise thy name." Let this also be your resolution.

THIRD DAY OF DECEMBER.

ST. FRANCIS XAVIER, CONFESSOR, OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS.

St. Francis Xavier,—the great Apostle of the Indies, as he is called in the Bull of his canonization—the celebrated Thaumaturgus of the 16th century, the irreproachable witness of the truth of our holy religion, the ornament of the Society of Jesus, and of the entire Catholic Church,—was of royal lineage, and was born of illustrious parents, at the Castle of Xavier, in the kingdom of Navarre. Having passed his childhood, he was sent to the University of Paris, to study the liberal arts, for which he evinced an especial inclination. He applied himself so diligently and made so much progress, that he was not only created Doctor of Philosophy, but also appointed to instruct others in that science. All his aim was to gain honors and to become great in the eyes of the world. His father intended to recall him home after some years, but his sister, who was Prioress in the Convent of the Poor Clares at Gandia, and had the reputation of being a Saint, knew by divine inspiration the great work for which her brother was destined by the Almighty, and persuaded her father not to insist on his return, saying, in a prophetic manner, that Francis was chosen to become the apostle of many nations. Whilst Xavier was teaching at Paris, St. Ignatius came to the same city to finish his studies. Knowing, by divine inspiration, how much good Francis, who was so highly gifted by the Almighty, would be able to do for the salvation of souls, he sought the friendship of the young Professor, and gradually showed him the emptiness of all temporal greatness, and drew him from his eagerness to obtain worldly honors by repeating the earnest words of Christ: "What will it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" These words of our Saviour, coming from the lips of a St. Ignatius, so deeply pierced

the heart of Xavier, and made so indelible an impression, that he became entirely converted. Taking St. Ignatius as his guide, he followed his precepts, and after having most fervently gone through the "Spiritual Exercises," he resolved to devote himself, with Ignatius, to the greater glory of God. On the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, in the year 1534, Ignatius, Xavier, and five others, made a vow in the Church of Montmartre; at Paris, to consecrate their lives to the salvation of souls. Soon after, Xavier, by the order of St. Ignatius, went with some of these zealous men to Italy. At the very beginning of this journey, which was to be performed on foot, Xavier gave a striking proof of the ardor of his spirit. Before his conversion he had been a great lover of dancing and gymnastic exercises; and so greatly excelled in them, that he had taken great pride in these accomplishments. To punish this vanity, he tied his arms and ankles so tightly with small knotted cords, that he could not make the least motion without pain. After the first day's march his pains became so intense that he swooned away and was forced to reveal the cause. The cords had cut so deep into the flesh that they could hardly be seen. The surgeon who was called, declared that a painful operation was necessary to cut the cords out of the flesh. Xavier and his companions not wishing to be delayed on their way, prayed for aid from on High; and on the following morning they found not only the cords broken, but all the wounds entirely healed. Having given due thanks to the Almighty for this miracle, they continued their journey. At Venice, Francis spent two months in the hospital, nursing the sick most tenderly. While there it happened that he found, among the sick, one who was suffering from a loathsome ulcer. Xavier felt a natural repugnance to approach the poor patient, but, recollecting the maxim of St. Ignatius, "Conquer thyself," he unhesitatingly went to the sick, embraced him kindly, and putting his lips to the ulcer, cleansed it of all offensive matter. As a reward for so heroic a victory over self, God restored the sick man's health, and took from St. Xavier all repugnance to the most hideous forms of disease. Two months after this he was ordained priest, and said his first holy Mass, amid a flood of tears, after having prepared himself for it by forty days of solitude, many prayers, austere fasting and other penances. At Rome, whither he was called by St. Ignatius, he preached for a time with great success. It was at this period that John III., King of Portugal, requested the Pope to send him six of the disciples of St. Ignatius, for the Indies. St. Ignatius, on account of the small number of his followers, gave only two, Simon Rodriguez and Nicholas Bobadilla; but as the latter fell ill just before

the time appointed for setting out, Francis Xavier, whom heaven had selected for this mission, was sent in his stead. No tongue can tell the joy with which the Saint received this news, which fulfilled what had been shown him, years before, in a mysterious dream. It had appeared to him, in his sleep, that he had a negro on his shoulders, whom he was obliged to carry, and that he was so fatigued as to sink to the ground under his burden. He then awoke and found himself in truth covered with perspiration and extremely tired. He was soon prepared for his journey from Rome to Lisbon, whence he was to sail for the Indies; and having received from St. Ignatius valuable instructions, and from the Vicar of Christ the papal blessing, with the powers of an Apostolic Nuncio, he set out with his companion, Rodriguez, carrying nothing with him but the crucifix on his breast, his breviary under his arm, and his staff in his hand. At the holy house of Loretto, where he stopped on his way, he commended his important mission to his divine Mother, and begged with childlike trust for her motherly assistance. Feeling in his heart that his prayer had been heard, he was greatly comforted, on leaving this blessed spot. After a wearisome journey, he at length arrived at Lisbon, where he took up his lodgings at the hospital, instead of going to the royal palace, where rooms had been prepared for him. Whilst awaiting an opportunity to depart for the Indies, he employed his time so usefully in hearing confessions, giving spiritual instructions, and serving the sick, that the king desired to retain him and his companion in Lisbon, and even wrote to that effect to St. Ignatius. But the Almighty, who had ordained that St. Francis Xavier should become the Apostle of the Indies, inspired St. Ignatius to suggest that Simon Rodriguez should remain in Lisbon, and Xavier be given to the Indies. Hence the Saint embarked with two other priests, whom he had received into the Society of Jesus. Nine hundred persons were in the same ship, many of whom became sick during the long voyage. Xavier became invaluable to them; he nursed the sick day and night, solicitous for their bodily as well as for their spiritual welfare, while he preached daily to those who were well, and led them by kind discourses to a Christian life. He continued these exercises of his charity and zeal at Mozambique, in Africa, where the vessel remained during the winter. His brief rest at night he took upon a coil of rope, or on the bare floor. He landed at Goa, the capital of the Indies, thirteen months after having sailed from Lisbon. Although a large portion of India had formerly been converted to Christ by the holy Apostle St. Thomas, the Christian religion had almost entirely perished by reason of wars and invasions and through the commerce and

association of the inhabitants with the Turks, Saracens, and heathens. The Portuguese, also to whom a great part of the land was now tributary, were in their conduct rather heathens than Christians. St. Xavier began his apostolic labors at Goa, which still preserved the memory of a celebrated prophecy, spoken by Peter of Covillan, of the Order of the Holy Trinity, in 1497, just before he was killed with arrows by the Indians. "In a few years," said this holy man, "there will arise, in the Church of God, a new religious Order which will bear the name of Jesus. One of the first priests of this holy Order will penetrate into the Indies, and convert to the true faith most of its inhabitants, by expounding to them the Word of the Lord." This memorable prophecy was fulfilled by the arrival of St. Xavier, and by the events which afterwards took place. A still more ancient prophecy of the arrival of St. Francis will be related on the 21st of this month, in the life of the holy Apostle St. Thomas. But to return to the apostolic labors of St. Xavier; he began, as well at Goa as at other places, by converting the youth. With a little bell in his hand, he went from street to street, and gathered the children, who ran after him in crowds. Leading them to the church, he explained to them the Christian doctrine, taught them prayers and songs, and told them to repeat at home what they had learned. Some of them he sent with his rosary to the sick, that the touch of it might, by the power of God, heal them. Some children proved little apostles and brought their own parents to the Saint that he might instruct and baptize them. Others brought him the idols of their parents or neighbors and broke them to pieces, or cast them into the fire, while others again sought the new-born children that they might not die without being baptized. When the young were sufficiently instructed, he turned his attention to the adults. To the Christians he spoke of penance and of leading a Christian life; to the infidels, of the truth of the Christian faith. He passed the whole day in giving instruction, nursing the sick, baptizing, hearing confessions, and other apostolic labors; his zeal was so great that more than once he forgot to eat or to drink, for the space of three or four days. He gave the greater part of the night to prayer.

As soon as he had converted the inhabitants of Goa, he went to Cape Comorin, and into the kingdom of Travancore. In the latter he baptized ten thousand persons with his own hand; and in the former he baptized so many, that on some days he was too much fatigued to raise his arm. Many of the idolatrous priests, called Brahmins, were convinced of their error and converted to the true faith, when they had seen four dead persons raised to life at the Saint's prayer. Many languages were spoken

in these countries, all differing widely from one another; but Xavier, like the Apostles, had the gift of tongues from God. He sometimes spoke, in one language, to people of various tongues, and all understood him. At other times he preached to people in their own language, without having learned it. This rare gift, combined with the many miracles which he wrought wherever he went, made his name so celebrated in the Indies, that the inhabitants of several islands came to him and requested him to instruct them in Christianity. The indefatigable missionary travelled from one island to another, from one country to another; for, to work and to suffer for the honor of God and the salvation of souls was his greatest joy. Never was his labor so wearisome, or his suffering so great, that he did not wish it might be greater. This was proved by the words which he spoke one night in his sleep, when he was shown the great labor and suffering that awaited him in the Indies: "Still more, O Lord! still more," cried he; "more work, more care, more suffering." At Meliapor, he visited the tomb of the holy Apostle, St. Thomas, and passed many nights there in prayer. At Malacca, one of the principal cities of the East, he converted a great many Mahomedans, Jews and heathens. One woman at this place had an only daughter, whom the holy man had baptized, together with the mother. The daughter died, and was buried. Three days later, the mother came to the Saint, and begged him to pronounce the name of the Lord over her dear child. Xavier, having offered a short prayer, said to her: "Go, thy daughter lives." The mother went, and, with the assistance of others, she opened the grave, and found her daughter living. From Malacca he visited several islands, some of which were inhabited by cannibals. He had no fear of death, as it was his greatest desire to give his blood for the faith of Christ. It happened that the ship on which he had sailed was in great danger. The Saint, taking his crucifix, dipped it into the raging sea. The storm immediately abated, but the crucifix dropped from his hands, and sank. This loss grieved the holy man; but his sorrow was changed into great joy, when, on landing on the island of Baranura, he saw a lobster come ashore, with the crucifix in its claws. Whilst the Saint thus wandered from one island to another, St. Ignatius, sent more laborers into the vineyard of the Lord. Xavier distributed them among the different countries of India, so that the work he had begun might be continued, whilst he sought more distant regions, in which he might plant the true faith. One single priest and one lay brother accompanied him to Japan, where the Christian faith had never been preached. Much more space than we can give would not be

sufficient to relate the labors which he took on himself, the dangers he encountered, the many miracles he wrought on the possessed and the infirm, and the number of people whom he converted. Yet he was not satisfied with what he had done in the Indies and Japan, but resolved to penetrate into China, in order to preach there also the word of Christ. Before doing so, however, he thought it advisable to return from Japan to the Indies, to make provision for the future prosperity of the Church in the Japanese Empire, as also to prepare himself for a successful mission in China. During this voyage, there arose so terrible a storm, that a small sloop, belonging to the ship in which Xavier had embarked, and fastened to it with a strong cable for greater security in those tempestuous seas, was torn away by the violence of the wind. No one could doubt that the sloop would founder, and that the fifteen souls on board of it would perish. Those who were in the ship were all in the greatest distress; but Xavier consoled them, and said: "In three days the daughter will return to the mother," that is, the sloop to the ship. His prediction was fulfilled, to the infinite amazement of all on board. But still more amazing was the fact that the fifteen persons that were in the sloop unanimously declared that Xavier had been constantly with them, and had steered the boat and comforted them. From this it was concluded that the holy man, by the omnipotence of God, had been present in two places at the same time. No sooner had he arranged everything most wisely in the Indies, than, accompanied by one lay brother, he went on board of a ship which sailed to the island of Sancian, thirty miles from the coast of China. The crew and passengers had much to suffer, on this voyage, as their supply of fresh water was exhausted. In this emergency, the Saint ordered some barrels to be filled with sea-water, and, having said a short prayer, invited the sailors to drink it. The water was found sweet: and the distress of the travellers was at an end. The indefatigable missionary at last reached Saucian, and saw from afar the shores of the great empire into which he was determined to enter, although he was well aware that to all foreigners the entrance was forbidden, under pain of death. But here, by the unsearchable decree of God, his labors were to end. While Xavier was arming himself for new conquests in new lands, it pleased the Almighty to call him to receive his reward for the hardships he had already suffered, and the work he had already performed. Like the great Prophet and Law-giver, Moses, he saw, from a distance, the land which he was not permitted to enter. God had reserved it for the successors of St. Francis to bring the knowledge of the true faith into China. On the 20th of November, 1552, the

Saint was taken sick with a severe fever, and at the same time, had a revelation of his approaching end. He was bled, but so unskillfully, that his pains were greatly augmented. Lying in a miserable hut of interwoven branches of trees, alone and forsaken, in abject poverty, without any bodily comfort, he was undisturbed and calm, having always desired either to give his blood for the Lord, or to die in poverty. Although he was grieved that the former was denied him, he felt consoled by the deprivations of the latter, in the knowledge that it was the will of the Almighty. His eyes were continually raised on high, or fastened on the crucifix, which never left his hand. It was touching to hear him, even in the delirium of his fever, pronounce the holy names of Jesus and Mary, and the short prayers to which he had been accustomed in his days of health: Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me! Mary, show thyself a mother! O most holy Trinity!" At length, having gazed for a time, with deep devotion, on the crucifix, he closed his eyes, bowed his head, and gave his great soul to his Master, saying: "In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped: I shall not be confounded for ever!" His death took place on a Friday, the 2d day of December, 1552. He had spent ten years in the Indies, Japan, and other pagan countries, for the salvation of souls. In this manner, the Apostle of the Indies gloriously ended his laborious life, after having travelled, barefoot, more than a hundred thousand miles, for the love of God, and for the salvation of the souls of men; having preached the Gospel in more than a hundred kingdoms and islands; having brought kings and nations into the fold of the Church, and baptized, with his own hands, so vast a number of converts, that Gregory XV., in the Bull of the Canonization of St. Francis Xavier, says that the Saint saw his spiritual children multiplied like the stars of heaven. His holy body, clad in priestly robes, was laid in a coffin, and covered with lime, that the flesh might be rapidly consumed, so that the bones might be brought back to the Indies. But after two months and a half it was found incorrupt, and exhaling the most delicious fragrance; and was taken back, with every manifestation of honor, to Goa, in the Indies, where it remains to this day, in a state of perfect preservation. Wherever the ship, which bore the holy remains, landed, a great number of miracles were performed; especially at Malacca, which was immediately freed from a raging pestilence. The right arm, with which this great Apostle had baptized so many thousand persons, was, some years afterwards, severed from his body, and brought to Rome, where it is still kept in great honor.

Whoever, even superficially, considers the above facts, will hardly be able to conceive how one man, in so short a space of

time, was able to perform so great an amount of work. His indefatigable zeal to save souls, the holiness of his life, the heroism of his virtues, as also the special gifts that God conferred upon him, accomplished what, humanly speaking, was impossible. Among the special gifts must be mentioned the gift of tongues, of which we have spoken above; as also that of prophecy, of which many examples are found in his life. The gift of working miracles he seemed to possess in an unlimited degree, so that he was sometimes called the God of Nature, and is justly styled the Thaumaturgus of modern times. Twenty-five dead persons were recalled to life by him, in testimony of the truth of the religion which he preached. It would be no easy task to find anyone, in the last three centuries, whom the Almighty endowed with such graces as He bestowed on St. Francis Xavier. He had chosen him as an Apostle for many nations. Wherefore, as Pope Urban VIII. said, He bestowed on him all the gifts that distinguished the Apostles. "Xavier," says this Pope, "was a truly holy and divinely chosen Apostle of new nations; and God made him celebrated throughout the whole world by miracles and prophecies." "He has not done less than the Apostles of Christ," says Gregory XV. The miracles of St. Francis ceased not at his death, and many occur yet in all parts of the world, when his intercession is invoked with piety and confidence. Whole books are filled with accounts of them.

And now we should say something of the heroic virtues of our Saint; but space is wanting. We can only advise our readers to peruse the fuller biographies of this Saint, where they will find an account of his burning love to God, his purity of conscience, his devotion to the Saviour, his self-abnegation, his veneration for the Blessed Virgin and other Saints, his heroic patience, his austerity towards himself, his deep humility, and lastly, his zeal in leading souls to heaven. I will only add here that even several non-Catholic authors speak in high terms of the Saint, and not only extol his zeal, but also relate the miracles he performed. "If Xavier had been of our religion, we should esteem him another St. Paul," writes Baldæus. And again: "Who is his equal in performing miracles?" Others speak of him in the same manner. When the heretics saw that the praise of St. Xavier reflected favorably on the Society of Jesus, some of them, in the last century, pretended to doubt that he had been a member of the Society, and others openly maintained that he had not. This untruth, which is in direct opposition to the evidence given by so many historians, found its way even into the minds of some Catholics. To refute it, we have only to read, without speaking of the bull of canonization, the letters of St.

Xavier to St. Ignatius and other Jesuits, which furnish a hundred proofs, that he always lived in the Society of Jesus, and died in it. Let us only read the Roman Martyrology, which says : "In the island of Sancian, the memory of St. Francis Xavier, of the Society of Jesus, Apostle of the Indies, who was highly celebrated on account of converting the heathens, and his great gifts and the miracles he wrought."

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Xavier was entirely won to God, by earnestly meditating on the words of Christ : "What will it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" He learned from it to take care of his own soul and to exhort others to do the same. Hence, when he said farewell to any one, he embraced him and said : "Take care of the salvation of your soul." To the king of Portugal he wrote as follows : "Contemplate and keep continually before your eyes, the words of the Lord : 'What will it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?'" The advice St. Xavier gave to the king, I give to you ; and the words he spoke to those from whom he parted, I say to you. Take care of the salvation of your soul ; your only, your precious, your immortal soul. Ponder deeply the words of Christ, as Xavier did. What benefit would it have been to the great Saint, if he had obtained the highest honors the world can bestow, if he had become the possessor of all earthly treasures, if he had participated in all the pleasures man

can enjoy ;—and had lost his soul ? and what will honor and riches avail you, if you neglect your salvation and lose your soul ? Answer this question to yourself, and if you love yourself, attend in future to the salvation of your soul.

II. St. Xavier, soon after his conversion, atoned, by a severe penance, for his former vanity in regard to dancing. What do you do to atone for so many sins which you have committed not only with your feet, but also with your hands, eyes, ears, lips and tongue ? You have a thousand times more reason than he, to think of doing penance for your former misdeeds, and to mortify those members of your body with which you have offended the Majesty of God. And when will you begin ? "Be solicitous," writes St. Xavier, in a letter to a friend, "be solicitous to confess your faults and vices, and to punish and correct them. Chastise yourself ; appease the offended God ; satisfy the divine Justice ; turn aside the punishment which you have deserved."

FOURTH DAY OF DECEMBER.

ST. BARBARA, VIRGIN AND MARTYR.

The holy virgin and martyr, St. Barbara, who, from the most ancient times, has been celebrated in the whole Christian world, was born of heathen parents in Nicomedia, of Bithynia. She was much beloved by her father, Dioscorus, on account of her unusual intelligence. He appointed a tower as a special place, well fitted up, for her dwelling, and chose the best masters to instruct her in art and science, but especially in paganism, as he feared she might be induced to unite herself to one not agreeable to him, or be seduced by the Christians, of whom he was a great enemy. But just this solicitude of her father gave her cause to think, and thus to arrive at the knowledge of the true God. She contemplated the heavens, the sun, moon and stars, in their regular course; she meditated on the changing of the seasons; looked on the wonderful creation of the world and its inhabitants, and justly concluded from it that there must be a Creator—that He alone must be the true God, and that the gods she worshipped had no power. To these contemplations she united prayers, and also led a most blameless life. The Almighty, who forsakes not one who aids himself, gave her opportunity to become instructed in the Christian religion, and to receive holy baptism, without the knowledge of her father. Meanwhile, a suitor for her hand came to her father and asked his consent. Dioscorus was not unwilling to grant the wish, as the young man was his equal in rank and wealth; but he would make his daughter acquainted with the offer he had received for her before he gave his word. Barbara had a great many objections; and her father, who did not desire that she should hastily give her consent, and would not coerce her, urged her no further; and as he was about to set out on a long journey, he thought it but right to give her some time for consideration. Barbara requested to have, for her greater comfort, a bathing-room added to her dwelling, which Dioscorus gladly granted her. The object of the holy virgin was, to have a special apartment where, with those who, like herself, were secretly Christians, she could pray to the true God. The father ordered two windows for the new room; Barbara, however, had a third added, in honor of the three Divine Persons in the mystery of the Holy Trinity. The room was, by the pagan's order, adorned with idolatrous statues, with which the holy virgin would gladly have dispensed. Looking at them, she wept over the blindness of

her father, who desired that she should worship them as gods. Going from one to another, she spat upon them, saying: "Those who honor you as gods are worthy to be turned into what you are made of—wood and stone." After this, she went to a column of marble, and with her fingers pressed the sign of the cross upon it, as if it had been wax. After her death, the health of many infirm, who devoutly kissed this miraculous cross, was restored.

No sooner had her father returned from his journey, than he desired to know his daughter's resolution. Already prepared by prayer for the approaching struggle, she said, unhesitatingly, that she would never consent to marry a pagan, as, being a Christian, she had chosen a much more noble spouse, Christ the Lord. Her father was speechless at this unexpected answer, and, when able to control himself, told her either to renounce Christ, or prepare herself for the most cruel death. The greater the wrath of the blind Dioscorus became, the more fearless was Barbara. This enraged him so greatly, that he seized his sword to take her life on the spot. Barbara, to escape his rage, fled, while her father, sword in hand, pursued her out of the city. According to an ancient legend, the fugitive virgin came to a rock, which miraculously opened, thus offering her a passage, and shielded her, for the moment, against her father's wrath. The latter, however, was not touched by this visible miracle, but passed over the mountain and pursued the maiden, as the hound pursues the deer. Barbara had, meanwhile, taken refuge in a cave, and would not have been found had not two shepherds informed the infuriated father of her retreat. Hastening towards the place, he found her praying. No tiger could assail his prey with more rage than this tyrant assailed his innocent child. He threw her on the ground, stamped upon her with his feet, beat her, and finally dragged her by the hair into the hut of a peasant, where he locked her up, until he had her brought back to his house by soldiers. Now began her martyrdom, which was so severe, that what she had before suffered was as nothing in comparison; for, Dioscorus was determined to force her to deny Christ. Seeing, at last, that all was in vain, he gave her up to the governor, Martian, that she might be dealt with according to the laws of the land.

Martian at first showed compassion for the Saint, in consideration for her youth, and endeavored to win her by flattery and kind words. Not succeeding in this, he had recourse to severity; and had her whipped with scourges, until her whole body seemed to be but one great wound. After this, she was dragged to a dungeon, where she was left to die. The Almighty, however,

who had destined her to still more glorious combats, sent an Angel during the night, who healed all her wounds, and encouraged her to perseverance, with the promise that she would overcome all tortures by Divine assistance. The following day she was again brought before Martian, who, not comprehending how Barbara had been healed, ascribed it to his gods. The virgin, however, said: "No, no, Martian! Wood and stone, of which your idols are made, have not this power. It is the work of the God of heaven and earth, whom I worship as the only true God, and for whose honor I am willing to die." Martian, full of anger at these words, ordered her to be tormented more cruelly than on the previous day. After her body was all bruised and wounded, she was barbarously burned with torches, and at last both her breasts were cut off. The torture was very great, but the eagerness of Barbara to suffer for Christ's sake was still greater. She gave no sign of pain, but turning her eyes to heaven, said: "Let not thy hand, O Lord, forsake me! In Thee I am full of strength; without Thee, I am powerless!" A new martyrdom followed after this. The tyrant commanded her to be scourged in public through all the streets of the city. This was more terrible to her than all her previous tortures; hence she turned to the Almighty, praying humbly that she might not be exposed to the eyes of the heathen. She was immediately surrounded by a bright lustre, that veiled her form from all eyes. The barbarous Dioscorus was present at the martyrdom of his holy daughter, from beginning to end, and not only looked with satisfaction at the whipping, burning, and cutting, but animated the executioners in their cruelties; and when Martian, at last, sentenced Barbara to be beheaded, he asked, as a favor, to be allowed to take the place of the executioner, and behead his daughter. Having obtained his request, Dioscorus took her to a neighboring mountain, followed by a great crowd of people. Barbara rejoiced to be thought worthy to die for Christ's sake; and no sooner had she reached the mountain, than she again thanked God for all the graces that He had bestowed upon her, and begged Him to assist her to the end. A voice was heard from on high, which invited the undaunted martyr to come and receive the crown that awaited her. Kneeling down, she bared her neck, and received from her father the fatal stroke. She was hardly twenty years of age.

Juliana, a pious woman, who had been present at the martyrdom, burned with the holy desire to give her life, also, for Christ, and was beheaded on the same day, after she had suffered great torments. Her body was laid beside the body of St. Barbara; but her soul followed the soul of the fearless virgin into heaven,

Quite different was the end of the inhuman father. Whilst he was descending from the mountain, with the blood of his innocent child still on his hands, a terrible thunder-storm arose, during which he was struck by lightning, and sank dead upon the ground. Thus the father went to hell on the same day on which his daughter ascended triumphantly to heaven. We must not omit to remark that St. Barbara is especially invoked in the whole Christian world for the grace of receiving the last sacrament before death; and many facts have shown that this invocation has the desired effect.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Barbara was executed by her own father, because she would not obey him, and deny the Christian faith. Dioscorus, the father, became the murderer of his own daughter. St. Barbara was right in not obeying her father; for when parents command anything that is against God, as the wicked Dioscorus did, children are not obliged to obey. In such circumstances, we must obey God, not our parents. Dioscorus's deed in beheading his own daughter, because of her constancy in the Christian faith, was most wicked; and as he, to all appearances, died in his wickedness, he now justly suffers in hell. Still greater punishment shall those parents suffer in hell, who deprive their children of their eternal life, and kill their soul by preventing them from doing good, and tempting them, by words and by examples, to do evil: for the spiritual, the eternal life is so much more to be valued than that of the body. Parents, therefore, should take good care that they do not become spiritual murderers of their children; as, otherwise, the precious blood which ransomed those souls will cry for vengeance against them before the Judgment-seat of the Most High. "The wickedness of others has been our ruin; our parents have been our murderers." Thus,

according to St. Cyprian, will those children cry, standing before the eternal Judge. Children also, should be on their guard, and not allow their parents to lead them to sin, and consequently to destruction. To say before the Judgment-seat of the Almighty: "Our parents brought us to the path of sin," will not be sufficient to excuse them, for, their own conscience will answer: "You knew that obedience was not required, when your parents commanded you to act contrary to the laws of God."

II. St. Barbara is the special patroness of the dying. Her intercession has obtained for many, the grace not to die suddenly, or without having received the holy Sacraments. Try to obtain this grace, by honoring her and begging earnestly for it. But while doing this, do not neglect anything that you are obliged to do to obtain what you desire. Prepare yourself in time for death, and keep yourself in such a manner, that if anything should happen to you, you may not die unhappily; for, God has nowhere promised that those who ask the intercession of St. Barbara, will be saved from a sudden death; but He has commanded you to keep yourself prepared for death, if you desire that your last hour should be calm and happy. It is the

greatest folly to postpone preparation for death, penance, reformation of life, or perhaps even the confession of certain sins, from one day to another, from one year to another, from health to sickness, and in sickness to the very last hour of life, in the thought that we can always obtain pardon. Of those who act in such a manner, St. Augustine says: "They seduce themselves, they deceive themselves, and play with death. It is highly dangerous, extremely foolish, and a horror to God, if we postpone anything on which our whole eternity depends, until the last convenient opportunity." "If you tell me," says St. Chrysostom, "that God has given many sinners time to convert themselves at the end of their lives, then I will ask you: Will He give it also to you? where is your assurance of it?" And of how many do we know with certainty that they obtained pardon in their last hour? St. Bernard says: "In the entire Scripture, only one is mentioned,

the thief who was crucified with our Lord; one, that you may not despair; only one, that you may not presume." Thinking of this one, think also of the other, who was crucified with Christ, but did not obtain pardon on that account. It was on Good-Friday, and he hung next to the Heart of Jesus on the Cross, yet he obtained no grace, no mercy. It is true that he did not seek it; but who knows if you will seek it? A sudden death may deprive you of the privilege of seeking it. Confusion and despair may overwhelm you in such a manner that you may not desire to seek it. If you wish to be sure, prepare yourself in time. "Tarry not in the error of the ungodly; give glory before death. Praise perisheth from the dead as nothing." (Eccl. xvii.) Confess before you are in danger of death, or before this danger is imminent. The confession of him who is half-dead, who has almost lost his consciousness, can not be trusted.

FIFTH DAY OF DECEMBER.

ST. PETER CHRYSOLOGUS, BISHOP OF RAVENNA.

St. Peter, on account of his great eloquence surnamed Chrysologus, or the golden speaker, was a native of Imola, a town not far from Rome. His parents were pious and distinguished people, who led their son from his early youth in the path of rectitude. In his studies he progressed so rapidly, that he was always the first among his schoolmates. The retired life he led, and his blameless conduct, induced the bishop of Imola to receive him among those whom he instructed in theology, and, in due time, to ordain him deacon. In this office, Peter showed such wisdom and ability, that he was beloved and highly esteemed by every one. By his untiring diligence, and the careful

instructions of the bishop, he obtained a thorough knowledge of the sacred sciences, and he was often entrusted with the most important affairs of the Church, which he always terminated to the great satisfaction of the clergy. Meanwhile, the Bishop of Ravenna died, and the clergy choosing a successor, sent him with a deputation to Rome, in order that the Pope might confirm the election. The bishop of Imola, who had some business to transact at Rome, went with the delegation, and took Peter along as his travelling companion. During the night before these travellers arrived at Rome, the holy Apostle, St. Peter and St. Apollinaris, formerly bishop of Ravenna, appeared to the Pope, and bade him place the mitre, not upon the head of him whom the deputies of Ravenna would present, but on the deacon, Peter, who would arrive with the bishop of Imola. When, on the following day, the deputies presented to the Pope him who had been elected bishop, the holy Father received them very courteously, but refused to confirm their choice, saying that he would bestow on Peter the priestly and episcopal consecration, as he, and no other, should become their bishop. The deputies could not conceal their dissatisfaction; but when the Pope related to them the command he had received from heaven, they praised the Almighty, and carried Peter in great triumph to Ravenna, after he had first been ordained priest and then consecrated bishop. The emperor Valentinian, who resided at Ravenna, as soon as he had received information, came, with the empress, to meet him, and accompanied him, amid great rejoicings, to the cathedral. The new bishop, however, manifested very little joy, and in his first sermon he said, among other things, that as God had laid so heavy a burden on his shoulders, he begged all present to assist him in carrying it, which they would do, first, by obeying the commandments of God, and then by following his instructions. He also assured the people that he was determined to seek only the honor of God and the salvation of their souls. He set immediately to work to accomplish this purpose. He preached frequently to the people, and always with such eloquence, that the most hardened sinners did penance, while others were induced to lead a more perfect life. Sometimes, when, with great earnestness, he reproved vice, his voice would fail him, so that he could not continue his sermon. This happened, one day, whilst he was speaking of the woman mentioned in the Gospel as having been sick seven years; but, on that occasion, the exhaustion of the bishop had such an effect upon his hearers, that the whole church resounded with cries for mercy. He endeavored to abolish several abuses of long standing, among others, the custom which the people had of masking them-

selves, on the first day of the year, and spending the day in wildly dancing, singing, and rioting around a statue that stood outside of the city. Against this shameful abuse St. Peter continued to thunder, until he had abolished it entirely. In one of his sermons on this subject he says: "Those who divert themselves with the devil on earth, cannot rejoice with Christ in heaven." He overthrew the statue where so much wantonness had been displayed, and, in place of it, he raised a crucifix. Besides his zeal in preaching, he manifested great love and compassion towards the poor and oppressed, and no one left him without being comforted. He most earnestly protected the widow and the orphan against all who would rob them. The ignorant he instructed with gentleness and patience in all that a true Christian ought to know. The sorrowful and disheartened he knew how to comfort and cheer with admirable ability and wisdom.

What made St. Peter especially celebrated in the whole Christian world, was his apostolic zeal in defending the true faith, and in refuting the heresies of Eutyches and Dioscorus. By request of the holy Pope, Leo I., the Saint wrote against the errors of these heresiarchs with so much learning and eloquence, that the heretics were made ashamed before the entire council assembled at Chalcedon; and as they were not willing to retract their heresies, they were disowned and banished from the true Church. To this day, this and other writings of St. Peter are greatly admired, which he composed for the benefit of the Catholics; for they are filled with heavenly wisdom. During the time that St. Peter administered the See of Ravenna, St. Germanus, bishop of Auxerre, came thither, and having witnessed the virtues of our holy bishop, became his warm friend. They animated each other to zeal in the service of God and in the protection of the true faith. Not long afterwards, St. Germanus became ill, and ended his life. Peter had the holy body embalmed and sent it to France, together with all that St. Germanus had left, except his cowl and his hair-shirt, which St. Peter kept to himself, and esteemed above all other earthly treasures. After St. Peter had, for eighteen years, most worthily administered his See, bravely defended the Church of Christ, furthered the honor of God and the salvation of his flock, by erecting several churches, by abolishing vices and abuses, and by leaving for the benefit of posterity many wholesome books, God revealed to him his approaching end. His life had always been blameless and holy, but to prepare himself better for death, he set out for his native city, where he hoped to be able to spend his time more peacefully in devout exercises. Arrived there, he

dismissed the ecclesiastics who had accompanied him, with the admonition to keep God always before their eyes, to observe His commandments, and to exercise great care in choosing a new bishop. Some time later, going into the church of the martyr St. Cassian, he offered upon the altar a golden crown, studded with jewels, and an equally precious cup: after which, having received the holy sacraments, he lay down beside the tomb of the holy martyr, prayed to the Almighty, and asked the Saints to assist him in his last combat, and lead his soul to the throne of God. With this prayer he ended his life, in the year of our Lord 452.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I "Those who divert themselves with the devil on earth, cannot rejoice with Christ in heaven." Thus spoke St. Peter of the riotous people and their masquerades. Hence the holy bishop judged and believed that it is sinful to hide under a mask in order to be more free, more wanton, or for some other sinful reason. Do the people of the world at present agree with this judgment of the Saint, or are they better able to judge this matter than a holy teacher enlightened by the Almighty? To speak in general of disguising one's self, it may be done in certain circumstances without sin, and is sometimes done in pagan or heretical countries, even by Catholic priests who appear dressed as merchants, physicians, &c., to give spiritual assistance to the Catholics, when they dare not openly exercise their sacred functions. The Almighty, in ancient times, gave the following law: "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment." Whoever transgressed this law, did great sin, as St. Thomas remarks; for, the following words are added to it: "For all that do so are an abomination unto the Lord thy God.

(Deuteronomy, xxii.) This holy teacher says, however, that disguising is in itself no mortal sin, if it be done for the sake of sport, without any desire to give scandal; or if it be done without evil intention, and if no danger of committing a fault against chastity is apparent. But whether such disguising is done, in our days, without giving scandal, or without evil intentions or without danger of sinning against chastity, they know best who participate in such amusements. It is very reprehensible, and a great sin and scandal to burlesque the holy Mass, and by that or similar means to ridicule religious practices or the ministers of religion. Generally speaking people disguise themselves that their conduct may be more wanton, that they may give way to their passions, and visit dangerous places; when they occasion scandal, or when chastity is endangered, all theologians judge that great sin is done by it. There is no doubt that masks may be used in some circumstances, without sin; but we are not justified in saying that it is only a harmless jest when worn by all sorts of persons, especially in ball-rooms and suspicious lurking-places. We know that

many have said that the cause of their disguising and wearing a mask was only to be unrestrained in their conduct, and yet remain unknown. Already in times long gone by, Job said of the debauched man, that he watched till it became dark, when covering his face, he said, "No eye will see me." (Job, xv.) The covering of the face, the mask, must be to him a cloak for his wickedness, and when there is such an intention or danger to commit sin, especially that of unchastity, it can hardly be said that all is only a harmless jest. This is the reason that the holy fathers and prelates of the church have preached and written so much against masks. I will cite only one, but one whose great learning has been acknowledged and highly honored by the whole world. It is the celebrated and holy Cardinal Charles Borromeo, who issued the following law for his entire diocese: "Masks shall be forever banished; since they remind us of our fall, and were invented by the devil disguised as a serpent." The holy Cardinal means that he considers Satan the inventor of masks, when he spoke under the disguise of a serpent, and thus seduced Eve. He calls them: "The horrible, detestable masks, under which people believe that they are allowed to speak impudently and act impiously; the vicious and wicked masks, which are enemies of all honesty and chastity, &c." This and more on the same subject is to be found in the writings of St. Charles; from which we conclude that, at his time, many must have used masks with wicked intentions. Whether, in our time, such wicked use is made of the mask, and whether the holy man said too much or wrote too severely, I leave to others to judge.

II. St. Peter left his labor, al-

though it was holy, when his last hour approached, in order the better to prepare himself for death. After having devoutly received the holy Sacraments, he invoked the martyr, St. Cassian, to assist him in his last hour. Our last hour is of such importance, that we are right in putting everything aside to make that hour calm and happy. Hence those do very wrong who, in old age or in mortal sickness, needlessly trouble themselves with temporal affairs until the very last hour, and think not earnestly on the chief affair which is lying before them, that is, death. Take heed not to commit so dangerous an error. If you are old or sick, discard all other thoughts and cares, and prepare yourself for a happy death on which everything depends. Employ usefully every moment left to you; for they are precious moments, in which you may win much for eternity. During the days of your health, also, no work ought to be of so much importance to you as the work of your salvation, an early preparation for death; for, on your last hour depends your whole eternity. It is useful to endeavor to obtain the intercession of the Saints. Above all, you ought to pray to the Lord of life and death for the grace to die happily; for, this is a grace, which is not due to us on account of our good works but which we can obtain from the divine Mercy, by humble and persevering prayer. After God, implore daily the Blessed Virgin, as the chief patroness of the dying, to intercede for you and assist you. Besides her, choose other holy patrons of the dying, to whom you should commend yourself in your last hour. This the Saints have done and taught. "We ought to invoke the holy Angels, who are given to us to protect us, and also the holy Martyrs, whose interces-

sion we have a right to request, as we still possess their holy bodies on earth." Thus speaks St. Ambrose. St. Bernard says: "We ought fervently to seek and invoke the Saints, that we may receive by their intercessions, what we, of

ourselves, cannot obtain." "The prayers of the Saints," says St. Chrysostom, "have great power to obtain anything for us, if while we pray to them, we do true penance."

SIXTH DAY OF DECEMBER.

ST. NICHOLAS, BISHOP OF MYRA.

St. Nicholas, whom the Almighty honored with numberless miracles, was born at Patara, in Lycia, of rich and pious parents, who having lived a long time without issue, at last, after many prayers, were rejoiced by the Lord with a son. It was a remarkable fact that Nicholas, when an infant, on Wednesdays and Fridays, refused to take nourishment from his mother's breast until nightfall; and this custom of partaking of no food on those days, he observed as long as he lived. When sent to school, he carefully avoided all intercourse with frivolous young men, and still more with the other sex. He shunned all occasions of evil, chastised his body by watching, fasting, wearing a penitential girdle, and read only such books as aided him to acquire virtue and knowledge. In this manner he preserved his innocence inviolate through all dangers. Having made great progress in virtue and knowledge, he was ordained priest by the bishop of Myra, who was his God-father. As he felt himself obliged by the sacredness of his station to strive to attain greater virtue, he redoubled his austerities, his fervor in prayer, and his zeal in doing good. The rich inheritance which came into his possession after the death of his parents, was employed only to relieve and comfort the needy. Among these were three young virgins whom their father, impoverished by misfortune, had advised to maintain themselves at the cost of their virtue, as he saw no means to provide for them. St. Nicholas, having heard this, went, during the night and threw into the father's room, through the window, as much money as was necessary to give one of the three maidens a marriage dowry. The same was done, after a lapse of some time, for the second and the third; and, by this noble work of charity, the father and the daughters were saved from temporal and eternal ruin. After some time, by order of the bishop of Myra, Nicholas was charged with the care of a

monastery, and performed this task with great prudence and care.

Meanwhile, his heart was filled with the desire to visit the Holy Land, and to pass the remainder of his life in solitude. The day on which he set sail he prophesied to the sailors that they would soon encounter a severe storm. The sailors, thinking they were better skilled in such matters, laughed at him, but the issue showed that the Saint was right; for so terrific a storm arose that all on board thought themselves lost. Hence they begged the Saint, as God had revealed to him the danger, to implore Him to turn it from them. Hardly had the holy man begun to pray when the winds abated and the storm ceased. Similar miracles the holy man performed frequently; hence he is honored and invoked as a special patron of sailors. In Palestine he visited the holy places with great devotion, and made the resolution to remain there in some retired spot, where he might serve the Almighty undisturbed. But, by divine admonition, he returned to his monastery, where he did not remain long, as God inspired him to go to Myra, the capital of Lycia. The bishops of that country had just assembled at Myra, to elect a successor to the late bishop, and while they were praying to be guided by heaven in their choice, God revealed to one of them that they should choose him who, on the following morning, should first enter the church, and whose name was Nicholas. St. Nicholas, knowing nothing of what had passed, was the first who entered the church the next morning. A bishop who had been appointed to be there, having asked his name, took him by the hand and led him to the assembled prelates, who informed him of the divine will and consecrated him bishop in spite of the tears he shed and the objections he offered.

Nicholas considering that so high an office required high virtues, endeavored to lead a still more perfect life than before. He practised severe penance, partook daily of one meal only, and never touched meat; took his short rest on the bare floor, gave all the time left to him from the administration of his functions to prayer, daily said holy Mass, at which he often shed many tears; visited the prisoners, the sick, and the poor of the city, among whom he divided almost all his income; preached on all Sundays and Holydays, and frequently visited the churches and parishes of his diocese, providing all with able priests and a sufficient income. In one word, he did all that could be expected of a bishop, who perfectly fulfilled his sacred duties. At that period there were still many pagans in Myra, besides an idolatrous temple, and the emperor sent his officers to exterminate Christianity and restore the pagan worship. On this occasion

our holy bishop showed his generous zeal. He went through all the streets and into all the houses exhorting the Christians to remain faithful to Christ, without fearing for himself either danger, persecution or death. He was seized, dragged out of the city, and cast into a dungeon, where he remained until Constantine the Great ascended the throne. The holy bishop experienced the greatest joy when this emperor gave orders to demolish the idolatrous temples and to build churches in their places. He himself assisted at the work and rested not until all pagan temples had disappeared from his diocese. Some time later an opportunity presented itself to him to fight against the Arian heresy, which he condemned in the Council of Nice.

The many and great miracles that he performed and the fame of his holiness gave him great consideration. Eustathius, an avaricious officer, had condemned to death three innocent citizens, living not far from Myra, in order that he might take possession of their property. No sooner had St. Nicholas been informed of this than he hastened to the place, where he found the three men already in the hands of the executioner. The Saint ran towards him and took the sword from him; he then reproved the wicked judge with severe words, and thus freed the innocent persons, amid the great rejoicings of the people.

Still more remarkable is the following: Constantine, the emperor, had condemned three of his most renowned generals to death, on false accusations. These, having heard much of the holiness of the Bishop of Myra, called on God to come to their aid for the sake of His servant. In the night before the day on which the sentence on the three prisoners was to be executed, Constantine saw St. Nicholas standing before him, threatening him with divine vengeance if he did not immediately recall the sentence against the innocent men. In the same manner the Saint appeared to the unjust accuser. Both, greatly frightened, set the prisoners free, and sent them with many rich gifts to St. Nicholas, to thank him for having thus protected them. Almost at the same time the Saint appeared to some sailors who were in great danger of being wrecked, and had invoked him. They saw him at the helm, guiding the ship safely to land. When they expressed their gratitude to him, he said: "My children, give honor to God; I am but a poor sinner." Taking them aside, he said that their sins, which he named to them, had been the cause of the danger they experienced, admonished them to repent, and then dismissed them. On account of this and numberless other miracles, the holy bishop was called the Thaumaturgus, or Wonder-worker of his age. All his biographers unite in saying that he raised many dead to life. Among these were three

children who had been cruelly murdered and cast into a tub; and this miracle is frequently represented by artists in their pictures of the Saint.

Although St. Nicholas was gifted with such high graces, and administered his episcopal functions so well, he yet feared that he did not do enough, and frequently prayed to God to release him from this burden. A voice from heaven, however, encouraged him, saying: "Fear not, Nicholas, I will recompense thy faithful services." God also revealed to him the day and hour of his death, and the Saint, rejoicing soon to see the Lord, received with great devotion, the holy Sacraments, and after a short sickness ended his holy life. In his last moments he saw heaven open, and a great multitude of angels came to accompany his soul to heaven. His last prayer was the Psalm, "In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped." When he came to the words, "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit," he calmly expired. From his body emanated a miraculous oil, which restored the health of many sick. This oil is still flowing at Bari, in Apulia, where the holy body is enshrined, and is yearly visited by many devout pilgrims.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Nicholas was very generous to the poor, but endeavored to hide his good deeds as much as possible, from men. Hence, in the darkness of night, he threw money into the house of the poor father of three daughters who stood so greatly in need of being protected. By thus acting, he obeyed the words of Christ, who said: "Take heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them; otherwise you shall not have a reward from your Father who is in heaven." And again: "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth" (Matth. vi.). If you do good to the poor, or perform other pious works, never do it with the desire to earn human praise; but let your motive be holy. Do not boast of the good deeds you have performed. The vain honor which you seek robs you of the reward that you would have received from God. "Those

who seek their reward on this earth," says St. Ambrose, "lay nothing by for the next life; and as they have already received their reward here, they cannot expect one in the other world."

II. God revealed to St. Nicholas the time of his death. You have no such revelation, and probably never will have it. It must be sufficient that God has revealed to us all, that we all must die. The time and the manner of your death God has concealed from you, for the reason that you should be always prepared to die. "The last day has been concealed from us," says St. Augustine, "that we may live well every day." "Watch ye therefore," says Christ, "for ye know not when the Lord of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight" (Mark, xiii.). Happy is he whom death finds prepared. This Our Saviour says, in the following

words: "Blessed is that servant, whom when his Lord shall come, he shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, he will set him over all he possesseth" (Luke, xii.). To this end, it is very useful to think frequently of death, as this thought will urge us to prepare ourselves for it in time, and to be constantly prepared. "It is quite certain," says St. Bernard, "that you will

die; but you know not when, how and where! As, therefore, death waits for you everywhere, if you wish to act wisely, be ready everywhere for him." St. Gregory writes: "We ought to have the hour of our death continually before us and always think of the words of Christ: 'Watch, for you know neither the day nor the hour.'"

SEVENTH DAY OF DECEMBER.

ST. AMBROSE, BISHOP OF MILAN.

St. Ambrose, one of the greatest doctors of the Church, a fearless defender of her rights, a terrible scourge to heresy, a most perfect example for all prelates, a miracle of Christian wisdom and eloquence, was the son of a Roman nobleman, who presided in Gaul as imperial governor. One day, while Ambrose was yet in his cradle, a swarm of bees alighted on his mouth without in the least harming the sleeping infant. It is believed that God by this announced the future sweet and yet powerful eloquence of St. Ambrose. After his father's death, the Saint went to Rome with his mother, brother and sister. There he, one day, saw the people kiss the hand of a bishop, and, on his return home, he offered his hands to some children to kiss, saying: "Kiss my hands; for, when I grow up I shall be a bishop." These words, spoken in childish jest, were prophetic. Ambrose was endowed by the Almighty with unusual facility for acquiring knowledge. Untiring in his studies, he became so excellent an orator, and so celebrated a jurist, that he was made governor of Æmilia and Liguria when he was hardly thirty-two years old. Probus, the imperial chancellor, said to him, before his departure: "Go, and administer your functions, not as a judge, but as a bishop." He meant by this that Ambrose should not govern by severity but with love and mildness; heaven's signification of these words, however, was different. When Ambrose, invested with this high dignity, arrived at Milan, he so completely gained all hearts by his wise and mild government, that the people obeyed him implicitly, and loved him most devotedly. Hardly had he been two years at Milan when Auxentius, the Arian

bishop, whom the Emperor Constantius had placed in the episcopal chair, died. The Catholics desired a Catholic, the Arians, an Arian bishop, and the conflict of contending parties produced a dangerous excitement. Ambrose, as imperial officer, thought it his duty to prevent greater mischief, and hence, going into the church, he endeavored by his eloquence to calm the people. Hardly had he ended his speech, when a child cried aloud: "Ambrose, bishop!" This came like a call from heaven, and all the people, together with the clergy, rejoiced and repeated three times: "Ambrose, our bishop!" This sudden accordance of so many different minds could only be regarded as providential, the more so, as Ambrose was still a layman, and not even baptized; as, at that period, some delayed their baptism until they had become quite old. Ambrose, inexpressibly amazed at this unexpected turn of affairs, employed all his eloquence to change the thoughts of the people; he mingled his tears with his words, and when he found that all was of no avail, he secretly fled. Being soon found and brought back, he twice attempted to escape again, but was each time found. Valentinian, the emperor, was greatly pleased with the choice, and when Ambrose recognized that it was the will of the Almighty that he should fill the vacant See, he made no further resistance. After having prepared himself, he was baptized, ordained priest, and consecrated bishop; and then entered upon his high ecclesiastical functions with the most holy intentions.

He who would endeavor to relate all that the bishop, so miraculously elected, performed for the welfare of the Church, and the holy life he led, would have to write many volumes. Let it suffice to say, that he exercised himself in all kinds of good works. Early in the morning he passed a long time in prayer. He often exhorted others to do the same, saying: "Do you not know, O man, that you owe your first thoughts, the first words of your mouth to the Lord your God? Daily must you make Him this offering." His severity in fasting was extremely great, and when advised to moderate it, for the reason that it would occasion his early death, he said: "Many have found death from too much eating, no one from fasting." Unbounded was his charity to the poor, and his episcopal revenues were almost all employed to assist the needy. Three points he had determined to observe most strictly: to say Mass every day; to preach to the people every Sunday, and to leave nothing undone to spread the true faith, abolish heresy, and correct the morals of the people. In his sermons, he spoke so frequently of the merit and worth of virginal purity, that the number of those can scarcely be counted who made the vow of chastity, and received

from his hands the consecrated veil. Still greater was the number of hardened sinners and heretics whom he converted by his sermons. Among the latter was Augustine, who afterwards became so shining a light in the Church. St. Ambrose baptized him with his own hand, to his great consolation. The knowledge of the divine mysteries which Ambrose manifested in his preaching and writings, was imparted to him by heaven; hence he is represented with a dove at his ear, as a symbol of the Holy Ghost, who inspired him when he spoke or wrote. An Arian heretic testified that he had seen an angel speaking to St. Ambrose in the pulpit; and this miracle converted the heretic. The fortitude with which he protected the rights and privileges of the Church against the heretics and against crowned heads, was almost more than human. The Arians persecuted him in every possible manner, especially after the death of the pious emperor Gratian, when the wicked empress Justina, wife of Valentinian the younger, ruled the land. The holy man, however, always resisted bravely. One day, the emperor Valentinian, counselled by the empress Justina, sent an order to him to give up a church to the Arians at Milan. The bearer of this order menaced the bishop with death in case he refused; but Ambrose paid no attention to the menace, refused to obey the order, and reprimanded the emperor. Among other things he said to him: "Do not imagine that you possess an imperial right over that which belongs to God. To the emperor belong the palaces, but the churches to the priests. You have power over the walls of the churches, but not over the sanctuary." To this subject belongs, also, what he wrote at another time to the emperor Theodosius: "The purple makes one a king or an emperor, but not a priest." Justina raged with anger, and hired a man to carry the bishop off secretly out of the city, that she might deal with the Catholics according to her own pleasure. The hired ruffian waited in the neighborhood of the church with a carriage, into which he was forcibly to place the bishop; but the Saint was accompanied by so many people, that the plan of the empress could not be executed. God even so ruled it that, a year later, this godless man was taken out of the city in the same vehicle, on account of his crimes. At another time, the Arians sent an assassin into the episcopal palace to murder the Saint; but when the wretch raised the sword for the deadly stroke, his arm suddenly stiffened in such a manner that he was unable to move it. He then repented of his evil design, knelt at the feet of the bishop, and begged pardon. Ambrose not only forgave him, but also restored the use of his arm, and admonished him to reform his life. At another time, they bribed a magician to

strangle the Saint in his own room by his witchcraft. Although this magician conjured several demons of hell, and commanded them to strangle the Saint, they could not harm him, nor even go near his dwelling, as it was surrounded by angelic hosts. The bishop, thus miraculously protected, was not to be frightened by the persecutions of the Arians, but continued in his zeal to work against them, so that many of them became converted. He strove with equal fortitude against the heresiarch Jovinian and his followers, whom he banished entirely out of his diocese.

The Saint never manifested greater strength of mind than at the time when the pious emperor, Theodosius, at the instigation of some wicked courtiers, had cruelly slaughtered several thousand inhabitants of Thessalonica, in reprisal for the assassination of one of his generals. When, some time afterwards, the emperor wished to enter the Church, the bishop, clad in his episcopal robes, went to meet him, and commanded him to stop and not enter the sacred building until he had done penance. The emperor, awestruck at this proceeding, said: "Did not King David sin?" The holy bishop replied: "You have followed King David in his sin; follow him also in doing penance;"—and permitted him not to enter the church until he had done penance during eight months. Much that the holy man did for the honor of God and the welfare of the true Church and of his flock, we must omit, and say a few words of his happy departure from this life. St. Ambrose became enfeebled by the unceasing labor imposed upon him, and also by his rigorous fasting and other penances, and his soul longed to see God, the end and aim of his being. The day of his death was revealed to him, and when he was seized by his last illness, he was begged to pray that his life might be prolonged for the benefit of the Church and the salvation of souls; but he replied: "I have lived in such a manner among you that I need not be ashamed; and I fear not to die, because we have a merciful Lord." St. Honoratus, bishop of Vercelli, was at that time in the palace of the bishop. During the night he was suddenly awakened by a voice saying to him: "Honoratus, rise quickly; the Saint is dying." Honoratus repaired hastily to the sick bishop, administered once more the holy sacraments to him, after which the Saint, his arms folded over his breast, gave his soul to our Lord, in the year 397 of the Christian era, at the dawn of Easter Sunday. Oh! how happy a dying day! God, who had glorified His faithful servant during life by miracles and especial graces, ceased not to increase his glory after his death. The many eloquent works which still exist of this great Father of the Church, are witnesses of his perfect holiness and heavenly wisdom.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Remember the words of St. Ambrose: "In too much eating many have found their death; but none in fasting." Heed this sentence well; especially if you belong to those poor and deluded beings who imagine that the fasts, ordained by the Church, are injurious to health. Even the word of God assures us, that many have shortened their lives by intemperance in eating and drinking, and the experience of almost every day is another overwhelming evidence of this fact. But where can you point out to me any one who shortened his life, by observing the fasts ordained by the Church? The word of God assures us that those who are temperate in eating and drinking, prolong their lives. Whom do you believe,—the word of God, or the evil Spirit, who, through the mouth of the free-thinkers, the heretics, or of those wicked persons, whose life makes them despicable, says, that fasting and abstaining is hurtful to man, that it is the cause of many infirmities and that it shortens life. The true Church, by whose mouth God speaks, prays: "O Lord, who, by holy fasting and abstinence, dost help both soul and body:" which means: curest soul and body as by a remedy. I believe in this prayer, and with me all those who are true Catholic Christians.

II. "I fear not to die, because we have a merciful Lord," says St. Ambrose. So it is; we have a merciful, a most kind Lord. All who endeavor to serve Him faithfully during their life, can and may comfort themselves with the thought of the divine mercy in their last hour. Satan sometimes tries to frighten and drive to despondency

even pious souls, but recollecting that they have served the Lord rightly, and confessed their sins, they ought not to listen to the Evil One; but, contemplating the infinite mercy of God, comfort themselves and say: "We have a merciful Lord." In Him will I trust; He will not forsake me. But those who during their life, have abused the divine goodness in order to be more wicked; who sinned because God, so infinitely good and merciful, would forgive them; these, I say, have reason to fear the temptations of Satan in their last hour; for, he generally comes then to throw us into gloom and despair by representing the severity of the divine Justice. Take care not to be of the number of these unhappy people. Serve God faithfully during your life; do not offend Him: and if you have done wrong, do penance and seek to regain the grace of the Almighty. In this manner, you will be able to comfort yourself on your death-bed with the thought of His goodness, and say: "I have a merciful God; in Him will I trust." Exercise yourself to-day in this hope, and say with King David: "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the protector of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear. Turn not away thy face from me. Be thou my helper, forsake me not, do not thou despise me, O God, my Saviour!" (Psalm, xxvi.) And again: "I cried to thee, O Lord, I said: thou art my hope, my portion in the land of the living." (Psalm, cxli.)

EIGHTH DAY OF DECEMBER.

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

The name of this festival is sufficient to awaken delight in the hearts of all true children of Mary, and to incite them to the most tender devotion ; but its grandeur demands to be spoken of in particular, and recommended to the special attention of the faithful. Joachim and Anna, the holy parents of the Blessed Virgin, had been united almost twenty years, without having been blessed with a child to inherit their temporal possessions or their virtue. This barrenness, which in ancient times was considered a great dishonor, and a curse of the Almighty, saddened the holy couple greatly ; but they submitted to the divine will and bore with patience the shame which was attached to it. The Almighty, however, who had chosen them to become the parents of the most blessed child, after having tried their patience for twenty years, sent an angel to them, who announced that Anna would give birth to a daughter, who was destined to become the mother of the long-promised Messiah. Joachim and Anna, greatly rejoicing, continued the prayer which they had until then offered to God, to ask His blessing, and to thank Him for His grace. The angel's words were fulfilled. St. Anna, in due time, brought forth the pure, unspotted daughter, who was destined to become the Mother of God, the Most Blessed Virgin Mary.

Several centuries ago, the question arose whether the Blessed Virgin was conceived, like all other human beings, in original sin, or if she had been exempted from it. No one doubted that she was free from original sin at her birth, and sanctified before she was born, as it is known from Holy Writ that the same grace was bestowed on the holy prophet Jeremias, and on the forerunner of Christ, St. John the Baptist, who surely cannot be compared in dignity with the Mother of the Saviour. The only doubt was, whether Mary had been defiled, at least for a short time, by original sin, and had afterwards been purified ; or if her blessed soul had been created in sanctifying grace, and had thus been so entirely exempted from original sin that she had not been for one moment defiled by it. There were several who, in their zeal for the honor of the Redeemer of mankind, maintained the former, without sinning by this against their faith, as the Church had not yet pronounced the latter as an article of faith. There were, however, a great many more who taught the latter, and confirmed it by many reasons. The latter were supported by several universities, religious societies, entire countries and king-

doms, ecclesiastical and temporal authorities ; and the doctrine became so firmly established, that it was strictly forbidden, under pain of severe punishment, to teach or maintain the contrary.

The principal of these reasons is drawn from the high dignity to which Mary was chosen by God, when He elected her to become the mother of His only Son. This dignity is so high, that it is but right to recognize Mary as free from original sin. "It is but just," says St. Anselm, "that the Blessed Virgin should shine with a purity which, after that of God, must be recognized as the greatest." Had Mary been defiled with original sin, and then purified from it, how much greater would her purity have been than that of St. Jeremias and St. John, who also were sanctified before they were born? It would not then have been the greatest, which, after God, we can imagine. The souls of Adam and Eve would have been more stainless in their creation. St. Bonaventure says: "It is but fit that the Blessed Virgin should be without any stain, and that she should so entirely conquer Satan, that she was not even for one moment subject to him." If Mary's soul had been, only for one moment, spotted with original sin, she would have been subject to Satan for that length of time ; she would have been a seat, a dwelling of the devil, a slave to him, and a child of divine wrath. Would it have been suitable that the only Son of God should dwell nine months in the womb of a created being, who before, though for ever so short a space of time, had been a dwelling of Satan? Can we think, without trembling, that she, who was chosen from all eternity to become the mother of our Lord, had been a slave of the devil, an object of divine wrath? If this had been the case, Satan could have boasted that, before Christ, he had inhabited the Ark which was destined by the Almighty, not to preserve manna, or the lifeless tablets of the law, but to keep, during nine months, the holy Law-giver Himself. Would this have been worthy of Christ? No one will dare to say it. Hence, the honor of Him, whom Mary gave to the world, demands that she should have been conceived immaculate. The high dignity to which Mary was raised allows not the thought that she, even for one moment, was defiled with original sin.

St. Augustine, when expounding to some heretics that nobody had lived on earth without sin, added: "Except the Blessed Virgin, whom, out of reverence to her Son, I will not allow to be named, when there is question of sin." This holy teacher believed Mary exempt from all sin, and although he was discussing actual sin, yet the reason which he gives for her being pure from all actual sins is as strong when applied to original sin. The honor of our Lord, that is of our Saviour, demands that we rec-

ognize Mary as having been free not only from actual, but also from original sin. We honor Christ by believing that He had a mother always immaculate. To say that His Mother ever was defiled with sin, and hence that, at least for a time, she was a slave of Satan, cannot but dishonor Him. Besides this, it is certain that God loved Mary more than all other creatures, as He raised her above them all by choosing her to become the Mother of his only Son. We cannot therefore doubt that He was more liberal to her in bestowing graces than He was to others. He created the Angels and our first parents in sanctifying grace ; why should we not then believe that He created Mary also thus, and that He bestowed upon her the grace of never being defiled by sin? God could give her this grace ; who dares to doubt it? He preserved her from the stain of original sin, because He is Almighty. It was also right that He should impart such grace to her, because He had chosen her as His mother. Why should we not then be convinced that He imparted this grace at the moment of her creation, since we know that He bestowed more graces upon her than upon other creatures? The Angelic doctor says: "We believe rightfully that she who gave life to the only Son of the Father, received greater graces than all others." Thence we must also believe that she received the grace of exemption from original sin.

Therefore the holy Fathers say that she was pure from all sin, entirely free from every spot, and that she was always more holy than the angels. "Who is now more holy than she? Not the Prophets, not the Apostles, not the Martyrs, not the Patriarchs, not the Angels, not the Cherubim or Seraphim," says St. Chrysostom. St. Ephrem writes: "Mary the Virgin, Our Lady, is undefiled and far from a stain of sin." St. Ambrose, also, calls the Blessed Virgin "free from every stain of sin." St. Epiphanius has these words: "She stands higher than them all, except God. She is by nature more beautiful than the Cherubim, the Seraphim, and all the heavenly hosts." How could all this be said truthfully of her, if she had not been free from original sin? Other holy Fathers, and celebrated Doctors of the Church, speak still more clearly. We will cite only a few. St. Peter Damian says: "The flesh which Mary took of Adam refused to take the stain of Adam." St. Anselm writes: "If Jeremias, the prophet, was sanctified before he was born, and if the forerunner of Christ, St. John, was filled with the Holy Ghost: who will dare to say that Mary, in her conception, was deprived of the grace of the Holy Ghost? And again: "If God preserved the good Angels from sin, while others fell, could He not preserve His future mother from all sin? He had decreed from all eternity that she should

become the Queen of Angels: how can we then believe that she was put lower than the Angels?" And again: "My tongue dares not utter, and my mind is loth to think that Our Lady, who has been raised so high by the power of the Almighty, on whom the wisdom of the Most High bestowed so many graces, and whom the mercy of God chose as Mother, that she in her conception was burdened with sin, brought by jealousy into the world." St. Ildephonsus speaks as follows: "It is known that she was free from original sin, through whom not only the curse resting upon the children of Eve was dissolved, but through whom, also, blessing was imparted to all." Omitting other declarations, I will only add the words with which the learned and pious Thomas à Kempis addresses the Blessed Virgin: "Thou art most beautiful in thy Conception: thou who art created to be the tabernacle of the Most High! Thou art, O glorious Virgin, not only partly beautiful, but wholly. In thee is no spot of sin, neither of a venial, nor of a mortal, nor of original sin. Never has a spot been in thee, never will one cast a shadow upon thee!"

It is true that, according to the general law, all men descending from Adam are conceived and born in original sin. But could not He who gave this law, exempt Mary, as He exempted her from other general laws? The law of God was given to Eve, for all mothers, in these words: "In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children;" and yet Mary was excepted from this law, as she not only brought forth her Son without pain, but with inexpressible joy. Assuerus, the King, had forbidden, under pain of death, that any one should come into his presence uncalled; but he excepted his beloved Esther from this command. "Not for thee, but for all others exists this command," said he. Why should we not believe that Christ the Lord exempted His mother from a general law, since He loved her more than Assuerus loved Esther? It is true, all men are conceived in original sin, according to the general law. Mary alone is exempted, by a special grace, in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, her Son and Redeemer. Jesus Christ redeemed all mankind, hence also Mary; but He redeemed Mary in a special and peculiar manner. "Other men," says St. Bonaventure, "have been raised from their fall by the Saviour; but Mary has been upheld by Him, that she should not fall." And again: "He redeemed her from original sin, not as if she had been defiled by it; but He preserved her by an especial grace, so that she should not be stained by it." In a similiar manner David thanked the Lord for having released him from the sword of the wrathful Saul, by preserving him from it.

Hence, it is evident, as we have said before, that Mary was

conceived without original sin. To teach the contrary was, in former times, forbidden by several decrees of the Apostolic See. At present, it would be an error against the Faith; for although the holy Church believes only what God has revealed, and what, from the beginning of Christianity, was taught by Christ and His Apostles, she does not always pronounce these truths in the same solemn and explicit manner. The Apostles placed only twelve articles of faith in the general creed; but later, the errors which, at various times, were broached by heretics, required that the articles of faith should be more defined and made more explicit. In regard to the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, it was not a heresy against it that occasioned the solemn declaration, but the universal desire of the Christian world, and the many miracles which had taken place by invoking Mary's assistance, in virtue of this prerogative. The holy Father, Pius IX., found himself therefore, at last, induced to ask the opinion of the bishops of the entire Catholic World. Having obtained this, he invited many of them to Rome, where in the Church of St. Peter, on the 8th December, 1854, surrounded by two hundred Prelates of the Church, and a large number of the faithful, after invoking the Holy Ghost, the Pope, as successor of St. Peter, and head of the Church, with tears of emotion and piety, solemnly declared that, "It is a truth revealed by God that Mary was conceived without original sin." Rome and the entire Catholic World celebrated amid rejoicings this definition, so consoling to us and so glorious to the Blessed Virgin. We do not believe anything new by this, but we believe it now with that authority which the holy Church, built upon a rock, has given it as to an undoubted truth. Hence, pay a special devotion to this article of faith, and honor it by saying the office of the Immaculate Conception, or at least to say a short prayer in honor of the Blessed Virgin every day. Only one request more: Endeavor, above all things, by frequent invocations of the spotless Virgin, to obtain grace from God, to continue without sin, a life which you began in original sin, and to close it without sin, whenever it shall please the Almighty to call you. To the faithful of the United States of America, this devotion is so much more earnestly to be recommended, as Mary in her Immaculate Conception has been solemnly chosen as their patroness, whom they are exhorted to invoke as their special advocate at the Throne of the Almighty.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The Blessed Virgin was exempted by special grace from original sin. Her soul was created in sanctifying grace, and constantly remained in it. Although you have not received a like favor, but were conceived and born in original sin, the merciful God ordained that you should be cleansed from it by holy baptism. Thousands and thousands of persons had not this grace. They died, and daily die, in original sin without holy baptism. These can never go to heaven, as nothing unclean can enter there, if they have not at least desired to be baptized. Why then has the Almighty conferred upon you, in preference to so many thousands of others, the grace of holy baptism? Why did He not let you die in original sin, like so many others? Ah! there is no other cause to be found but the infinite mercy of God towards you. On this day, give fervent thanks to the Almighty for so great, so inestimable a grace which has drawn so many other graces after it, and will still draw many more. But remember that baptism alone is not sufficient for salvation. "To holy baptism must be joined a Christian life," says St. Augustine; "for he who said, 'unless ye are born again of water and the Holy Ghost, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven,' has also said, 'If your justice is not greater than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye can in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven.'"

II. As the Blessed Virgin was exempted from original sin, so also did she remain free from all

actual sin. She never offended God, and never lost the grace which she received in her Immaculate Conception. There are several Saints, who during their lives committed no great sin. It is also known, that many earnestly endeavored to avoid the least evil; but it is not known of any Saint that he never committed a venial sin, at least by imprudence or surprise. Only of the Holy Mother are we assured that, by special grace, she remained free from all, even the slightest sin. How is it with you? How long did you preserve the sanctifying grace received at baptism? No longer than until you committed your first mortal sin. And how soon after baptism, and how often have you been guilty of it! how horribly have you defiled your soul! Repent, to-day, with your whole heart, of your misdeeds; seek to cleanse your soul most perfectly from every stain of sin, and to keep it henceforth unspotted. For those defiled with mortal sin, heaven will be closed as surely as for those who are not cleansed by baptism from original sin. Pray to-day that the Immaculate Virgin may obtain for you from God the grace to cleanse your conscience perfectly, and to keep it pure in future. You can do nothing more agreeable to her, and you cannot more surely gain her protection, than by following her example, and guarding yourself against all sin. "For," says St. John of Damascus, "she abhors sin, and delights in virtue."

NINTH DAY OF DECEMBER.

ST. LEOCADIA, VIRGIN AND MARTYR; AND ST. ROMARIC, ABBOT.

St. Leocadia was born in the celebrated City of Toledo, of pious and respectable parents. Her conduct from her early youth was in such harmony with the divine laws, that she served all others of her age and station as a model of true piety. When Dacian, the enemy of the Christians, came to Toledo, to exterminate Christianity, Leocadia was the first who was accused to him. To induce her to forsake the true faith, he used the usual means, flatteries, promises and menaces: all, however, without effect. He then sentenced her to be tortured, and the tender virgin was so terribly beaten with clubs and scourges that the blood flowed from her whole body. During this martyrdom, she kept her eyes immovably fixed upon heaven, and praised the Almighty for whose sake she suffered. The tyrant, after this, threw her into a dungeon, the air of which was poisoned, and threatened to proceed still more cruelly with her in a few days. Leocadia was not terrified at this menace; she even consoled those of her friends who wept, pitying her for what she had already suffered, and what she had still to suffer. "Why do you weep," said she, "you have no reason to pity me. Rather congratulate me, and rejoice that God has found me worthy to suffer for His name." She prepared herself in the dungeon for new sufferings, and called on God for aid. When, however, she was informed how cruelly the tyrant maltreated the Christians, and that only lately he had most barbarously tormented a well-known and delicate virgin, named Eulalia, her heart grew sad, and she begged the Almighty to take her soul to Him in peace, that she might hear and see nothing more of such cruelties. Making the sign of the holy cross upon a rock, she kissed it devoutly, and calmly expired; in 305, or as others say, in 303. In Toledo there are three churches, built in honor of this holy virgin and martyr, and in one of them lies her holy body.



To this short sketch of the life of St. Leocadia, we will add a few words on the life of the holy Abbot, St. Romaric, whose name appeared yesterday in the Roman Martyrology. This holy man was of high lineage. His father was one of the most renowned princes at the court of King Theodebert, and served his master faithfully in the war in which the latter was engaged

against his own brother, Theodoric, King of Burgundy. As, however, this war terminated fatally for Theodebert, the young Romaric lost not only his own father, but also his estates. Childebert, King of Austrasia, took pity on him and received him at his court, until later, when by the will of God, he came again into the possession of his estates. He dwelt also for a time at the court of Clothaire II. and of his son, Dagobert. His conduct, during the manifold changes of his life, was always that of a Christian, and he was never seen despondent in dark days, nor haughty in prosperity. Following the advice of the King, he married a pious Countess, who bore him three daughters, of whom the eldest married, but the other two consecrated their virginity to the Lord.

While he was at Metz, the holy bishop, Amatus, came to that city, and excited a great commotion among the people, by his apostolic sermons. He dwelt at the house of Romaric, who entertained him with great kindness and hospitality. The gold and silver dishes and other luxuries of the table gave to Amatus an opportunity to speak of the vanity of all temporal honors, happiness and pleasures, and of the bliss of those who for Christ's sake, leave the world and all its deceitful joys. In conclusion, he added the words of Christ: "If you desire to be perfect, sell all you have and give it to the poor, and you shall possess a treasure in heaven." Romaric, touched by the grace of God, determined immediately to leave the world, and serve the Lord in a cloister. Not content with this, he persuaded his two unmarried daughters and several of his acquaintances and relatives to choose the same life. Hence, with the consent of his spouse, he took the religious habit, with thirty others of his own station, and led a most holy life. After having thus passed several years most piously, he felt an intense desire to found new monasteries and to fill them with religious, that the Lord might be the more praised and glorified. With the permission of his Superior, he went, accompanied by St. Amatus, to the Vosges mountains, between Lorraine and Alsace. On the summit of a mountain stood a castle, which had formerly been a celebrated idolatrous temple. This castle he turned into a monastery, and built, at the foot of the mountain, seven convents for women. All these convents were soon occupied by fervent handmaids of the Lord; and it was made a rule, that as soon as a signal was given from the castle, the choir should assemble in each of the seven convents, in order that God might be praised from all at the same time. This mountain was therefore called the holy mountain, which name it still bears. St. Amatus administered the functions of a priest, and at his death, Romaric was ordained to

succeed him. He was very solicitous in visiting all the convents, and guided their occupants in the path of perfection. After many years, enfeebled by labors and penances, he was seized by a severe fever, which chained him to his bed. His spiritual children were much distressed at the thought of losing so loving a father, but he comforted them, and gave them many wholesome instructions. At last, having received the holy Sacraments, his soul went to heaven, on a Sunday, in the year 653. His holy body was buried amid great solemnities, and God glorified his shrine with many miracles.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Leocadia would not permit herself to be pitied on account of her martyrdom, but desired to be congratulated because she had been considered worthy to suffer for the sake of Christ. To suffer for Christ is a grace awarded by the Almighty. Hence it is written of the holy Apostles: "And they indeed went from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus." They regarded such suffering as a grace; but there are few who recognize and believe this truth. Surely there are many who imagine that it is a special grace not to suffer. Because everything goes as they wish it, they think that they stand high in favor with the Lord. But those who live in sin deceive themselves greatly; for, St. Bernard says rightly: "God condemns those in the other world, whom He does not reform by chastisement here below." St. Augustine writes: "It is a sign of God's wrath if you live in sin and He spares you. Hence, it is no sign of God's love towards you, if you have nothing to suffer in this world; it is much rather an evil sign, if you do not live piously. Christ gives to His dearest friends a taste of the bitter cup of His suffering. The example of the Apos-

tles, of numberless martyrs and confessors serves as a proof of this truth. God scourges, chastises by crosses and trials, each son whom He receives. Do you perhaps wish to be an exception? If you are excepted from the scourging, if you have nothing to suffer, you will also be excepted from the number of the sons, or children of God." Thus writes St. Augustine, who founds his words upon Holy Writ where it is said, as I have already remarked elsewhere: "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth; and he scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." (Heb. xii.)

II. Not to despond in dark days, and not to be haughty in good fortune, requires great virtue. This virtue St. Romaric possessed, and this alone speaks sufficiently in his praise. Do you possess this virtue? Ah! perhaps just the contrary; for I see that in adversity you are feeble-hearted, sad and troubled. When, however, all goes well with you, when you believe you are raised above others, you are haughty; you despise others and even think no more of the Lord. Correct in future this two-fold wrong. Should God send you suffering, whatever it may be, despond not. The same God who sends it to you will also give you grace and

strength to bear it, if you humbly ask for it. He has also the power to take it from you again and He will do so, should it be for the welfare of your soul. Hence, do not despond. Hope in God. And if the Almighty sends you temporal honors and well-being, do not, on that account, feel elevated, and despise not those who are below you. For, tell me: "What hast thou that thou hast not received?"—from God—"And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Corinth. iv.) The same God who

raised you above others, or blessed you more than others with temporal gifts, can also again lower you, and bless and raise others. Therefore do not sin against Him. "The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich, he humbleth and he exalteth." (1 Kings, ii.) "It is an easy thing for the Lord," says the Wise Man, "to make a poor man rich." "He has dethroned the mighty and raised the humble," says the divine Mother. Christ Himself said, that those who exalt themselves, shall be humbled and those that humble themselves shall be exalted. (Luke, xiv.)

TENTH DAY OF DECEMBER.

THE TRANSLATION OF THE HOLY HOUSE OF LORETTO.

By "the Holy House," we understand the blessed house, or rather a part, a room of it, in which Mary, the Blessed Virgin, lived for three years, and afterwards was greeted by the Angel; in which the only Son of God became man and dwelt for a long time with his pure Mother and his holy foster-father. This sacred dwelling first stood at Nazareth in Galilee, a province of Syria. The Apostles consecrated it as the first Church in Christendom; the first Christians held it in high honor, and pious pilgrims visited it with great devotion. Helena, the great and holy Empress, built over it a magnificent temple, which, in the course of time, was destroyed by the barbarians. When, in 1291, God in His incomprehensible Wisdom, decreed that the infidels should become possessors of the Holy Land, the Christians were driven out of it, and pilgrims were no longer permitted to visit the holy house. But the Almighty, who would preserve the honor and veneration in which this holy house had until then been held, wrought to this end a miracle such as the world had neither seen nor heard of. In the night of the ninth day of May, in the above year, the holy house was suddenly taken from the ground on which it had stood for more than twelve hundred years, and lifted through the temple erected over it, which parted in the middle, and it was carried by the Angels over land and sea, from Galilee to the far off Dalmatia,

where it was placed between Tersatto and Fiume, not far from the Adriatic sea. When, early in the morning of the following day, some people saw this unknown little chapel, they informed the inhabitants of the above-mentioned towns of it, and the amazement of all was indescribable.

Alexander, the provost, or ecclesiastical Superior of Tersatto, who was at that time very ill, greatly desired to know what little church it was, and whence it had come. During his fervent prayers, the Divine Mother appeared to him, and informed him of what he desired to know; with the addition that the immediate re-establishment of his health should be a sure proof of the truth of what she had revealed to him. Alexander awoke, found himself perfectly restored, left his bed, and gave due thanks to God and the Queen of heaven for the grace which had been bestowed upon him. No sooner had daylight appeared, than he went through all the streets of the town and announced to the people the revelation which he had had the night previous in regard to the little church; and, followed by all the inhabitants of the place, he went full of heartfelt devotion to the holy house. There he prostrated himself and gave humble thanks to God, who had so unexpectedly bestowed so great a treasure on him and his flock. Nicholas Frangipane, the Governor of Dalmatia, desiring to examine the matter thoroughly, sent four respectable men to Nazareth in Galilee. Having arrived there and gained admittance by paying a large sum of money, they asked the few Christians who still dwelt there, where they could find the sacred house wherein the Divine Mother had been greeted by the Angel, and the Son of God had been made man. The Christians replied that it had been suddenly taken away one night, but they did not know by whom, nor why it had been taken, nor where it was at present. They showed them the place where it had been and the foundations on which it had stood; and told them what had been in the house, namely, a picture of the Blessed Virgin and an Altar. The deputies measured the length and breadth of the place where the holy house had stood, and the width of the foundation, and found that all corresponded exactly with the chapel that had appeared in Dalmatia. In like manner, the time at which the holy house had been taken away from Nazareth, agreed with the time of its arrival in Dalmatia. The deputies also had seen, in the little chapel, all those articles which the Christians of Nazareth described as having been in the holy house. Hence there could remain no doubt of the truth of the revelation which had been made to the pious Alexander. Giving due thanks to God, they returned rejoicingly, and publicly announced the result of their journey. From that moment, the

people flocked in crowds towards the holy house, and God wrought many miracles on the infirm who took refuge within its holy walls. But the joy of the people of Dalmatia did not last long; for hardly had three years and seven months passed, when the holy house was taken from them. It was carried by Angels over the Adriatic sea, and arrived in Italy, surrounded by a heavenly light, in December, 1294. The Sovereign Pontiff decreed that the 10th of December, the day on which this happened, should be yearly commemorated in Italy. The happy spot where the holy chapel had placed itself, was a wood near Ancona, which belonged to a widow named Lauretta, from which the house was afterwards called the House of Loretto. Some pious shepherds, who watched by their flock, had seen this miraculous transfer of the Holy House, and approaching the spot where the house had rested, they were not less amazed than the inhabitants of Dalmatia had been when they first perceived it. When this became known, on the following day, every one ran to the Holy House. All were convinced that a miracle had taken place, but had no idea whence the Holy House had come. The many miracles which took place there, as in Dalmatia, on the infirm, drew thither a multitude of pilgrims. Some godless men took the opportunity to attack, plunder and even kill, in the stillness of the wood, many of the pious pilgrims. Such terrible wickedness could not be suffered near the sacred house; and before eight months had passed, the Angels took it again, and placed it nearer to the town of Recanati, where it rested on a hill. This hill belonged to two brothers of the nobility, who at first rejoiced at the grace thus bestowed upon them, but afterwards quarrelled on account of the rich offerings which the pilgrims made to the Holy House, of which each of them desired the larger share. At last, the one challenged the other to a duel. God, however, put an end to this strife. The Holy House, which had hardly stood two months on that spot, was again taken by Angels and placed not far off on the public highway. Thus its site was changed four times in the space of five years. This was done, without doubt, that so great a miracle as this translation should be much more readily believed by all persons, since it had so frequently taken place before the eyes of a great number of people. These frequent changes greatly astonished the inhabitants of Recanati and of all the neighboring places; they did not know what little church it was, nor how or why it changed its place so often. They, however, bore in their hearts great devotion to it; for they could not help perceiving, by the transfers and by the miracles that took place in it, that the Almighty favored this little church. The inhabitants of Dalmatia

at last discovered the secret of the holy building; for, as the frequent removal of the house became known, they immediately supposed that it must be the little chapel that had been taken away from them. Hence, crossing the sea, they came to the place where the Holy House stood, and recognizing it, they wept bitterly that they had lost it. After this they related to the inhabitants of Recanati how sacred this little house was and how greatly honored by the Almighty; who had lived in it; how sacred the mysteries which had taken place in it; and how they had come to this knowledge. All present were greatly amazed at these words, and prostrating themselves, they gave humble thanks to God, and held the house in great honor. But in order to leave nothing undone to arrive at all the facts of so miraculous an event, the inhabitants of Recanati sent a special deputation, first to Dalmatia, and thence to Nazareth in Galilee, to investigate the truth of all that had been told them with regard to the little chapel. At the return of the deputation, there was no longer any doubt that the house or chapel was the sacred dwelling in which the Virgin Mother had been born; where she had received the greeting of the Angel, and where the only Son of God had become man. Another deputation, which was sent for the same purpose some years later, by Pope Clement VII., after having carefully examined, both in Dalmatia and at Nazareth, the above facts, attested the perfect truth of the same. It may be said that there is not a fact to be found in the history of the Church, which has been more thoroughly investigated than this one.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The miraculous transfer of the Holy House, and the many miracles that took place in it, may serve to prove how much we please God by honoring and invoking the Blessed Virgin, and by making pilgrimages in a devout and Christian spirit. Therefore, let no Catholic allow himself to be misled by the heretics, who consider this as useless and superstitious. Let us continue to honor the Blessed Virgin with our whole heart, to invoke her often and devoutly, and to recommend ourselves to her care. We must, however, not forget what

I have frequently said, that the most efficacious way to honor her and to obtain her protection is to imitate her virtues. "Whoever desires the protection of Mary," writes St. Ambrose, "must follow her example." St. Bernard writes: "Do not neglect to imitate her, that you may become worthy of her intercession." Pilgrimages are not commanded in the New Law, but they are pleasing to the Most High. If you wish to perform them, after the example of pious Catholics, do so, as I have already elsewhere instructed you, with pious intentions,

and avoiding all that is displeasing to God and that weakens the power of your prayers.

II. The history of the Holy House should awaken the memory of the infinite love which Christ manifested to us when He descended from heaven for our salvation and became man in the chaste womb of the Virgin. "He desired to dwell among us on earth, in order to prepare a dwelling for us in heaven," says St. Augustine. Of such infinite love, so great a benefit, think especially during the present season of Advent, and give humble thanks to Him, for whose gracious coming the Catholic Church

prepares us. **As**, however, this coming is **only** a proof of a measureless love which Christ bears to us, it is but right that you should exercise yourself, during this month, in acts of love to Him. Love Him who has loved you in so incomprehensible a manner. Love Him with your whole heart and with all your strength; but love Him not in words, but in works. "Let us therefore love God; for, God has first loved us," says St. John. (1 John, xviii.) "I beseech you to manifest your love to Christ not in words only, but in deeds," says St. Bernard.

ELEVENTH DAY OF DECEMBER.

ST. DAMASUS, POPE; AND ST. ANNO, ARCHBISHOP OF COLOGNE.

St. Damasus, one of the noblest and holiest of Popes, was by birth a Spaniard. He received his instruction in virtue, as well as in the liberal arts, at Rome, whither he was taken by his father after his mother's death. His progress in both was such, that he was soon esteemed one of the most pious and learned men of his time. He was ordained deacon, and when Pope Liberius died, he was placed in the papal chair, of which he was thought worthy as well on account of his great erudition and holy life, as also for the fearlessness with which he had defended the Church of Christ against heresy. He governed the Church seventeen years and two months, in the most difficult times, with so much wisdom and virtue, that all ancient historians join in praising him. St. Jerome calls him, "a lover of chastity and a virgin teacher of a virgin church;" Theodoret, "a man adorned with virtue, and worthy of praise." St. Ambrose says, that Providence had especially chosen him to promote the welfare of the Church. The bishops, assembled in council at Constantinople, praise the fortitude which he displayed in protecting the true faith, and compare him to a wall of adamant. This strength of character the holy Pope evinced on several occasions. Soon after he had been elected Head of the Church, a certain man, named Ursici-

nus, sought to overthrow him. He made a cabal of some unruly minds, by whose aid he endeavored to gain for himself the papal throne. The holy Pope was deeply saddened by this, not because he dreaded to lose the dignity, but because he feared that the consequence might be a schism in the Church. Hence he was willing to give way to Ursicinus and pass his life in obscurity. The better disposed refused, however, to consent to this, and prevailed on the Governor of Rome to banish Ursicinus and his principal followers from the city. The others, who were allowed to remain, received the holy Pope's pardon, who never thought of revenging himself. Notwithstanding all this, there were several among them who, instigated by Ursicinus, endeavored to rob the holy Pope of his honor and good name, as they could not take his pontifical dignity and his life. They spread the report that Damasus had been surprised in the act of committing a crime against chastity. Most of the people, convinced of the holiness of their chief Shepherd, looked upon it as a slander; but the innocent man desired to lay the wickedness of the defamers bare to the eyes of the whole world. Hence he called to Rome forty bishops who were to hear the accusation and investigate the matter with all possible rigor. The evil-doers confessed their falsehood, and the innocence of Damasus was most clearly established. Hardly had the holy Pope overcome this and other persecutions of his enemies, when he had to fight, for a long time, against the heretics, who arose in different places and even at Rome. He assembled several councils at Rome, examined the doctrines disseminated by the heretics, and anathematized them as impious and heretical. Similar councils were also held in other cities. The most renowned of these was the general council which the Emperor Theodosius, induced by the Pope, called together at Constantinople, in which the decrees of the general council at Nice were confirmed, and Macedonius and others were anathematized as heretics and banished from the city. Besides this, the watchful Shepherd did not neglect to uproot the abuses which had crept into the church, and to exhort all Christians especially the bishops, to fulfil their duties. Among other regulations, he ordered that after the recital or singing of each Psalm, the following words should be added, as a confession of the Most Holy Trinity: "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen." He also built new churches and ornamented them splendidly. Many bodies of Saints he reverentially exhumed and exhibited for public veneration. The holy men who lived at that period, as Athanasius, Ambrose and Jerome, he esteemed highly and made use of their counsel. He

specially honored St. Jerome, whom he exhorted to work for the benefit of the Church by translating and expounding the Holy Scriptures. On account of these and many other endeavors, but above all, in consequence of his irreproachable life, he was so highly esteemed, that the Emperors, Theodosius, Gratian and Valentinian, commanded their subjects to profess only that faith and no other, which St. Peter had formerly preached at Rome, and which Damasus was now teaching ; and declared as heresy, all doctrines which had been denounced by the Pope. At the age of eighty years, the Saint ended his holy life by a holy death. It is known that, during his life, he restored the sight of a blind man, while after his death, many possessed were freed from the Evil One at his grave, and many infirm restored to health by his intercession.



To the short life of the holy Pope Damasus, we will add the life of St. Anno, Archbishop of Cologne, whose festival is celebrated in this month. St. Anno was a Count, and a native of Suabia. Walter, his father, wished to educate him for the army, but his uncle, a canon of Bamberg, took him away from his father's house, and had him carefully instructed in the liberal arts and ecclesiastical sciences, as he had perceived that Anno had unusual talents. The young man made rapid progress in all his studies and gained the highest esteem. He united with great knowledge, deep and heartfelt piety, as well as blameless conduct ; besides this, he possessed an agreeable form, and a frank disposition, free from all dissimulation. He was gifted with remarkable tact in arranging the most important affairs ; and on this account, Henry III., the Emperor, called him to court. When Herman, Archbishop of Cologne, had become acquainted with the excellent qualities, erudition, and virtues of Anno, he advised the canons to choose him as their Bishop, as soon as his own death would have vacated the See. His advice was followed, in the year 1055. Anno, raised against his will to so high a dignity, resolved at once, not merely to bear the name of Bishop, but also to fulfil most perfectly, all the duties of an ecclesiastical chief. Hence, his first care, so far as he himself was concerned, was to conduct himself in all his actions in such a manner as to serve as a model of virtue to his flock. After this, he was solicitous to further the honor of God and the salvation of those who were given into his charge. He appointed pious and learned priests to the parishes, and trusted the temporal affairs only to such as possessed the necessary knowledge and ability. He visited in person all the towns and

villages in his diocese, preached everywhere with great zeal, and admonished the people to lead a Christian life. In his episcopal palace, every one had admittance to him; he listened patiently to all complaints and requests, and dismissed no one without comfort. Some conscientious counsellors informed him that the poor farmers had been burdened by his predecessors with too heavy taxes. The compassionate Archbishop gave immediate orders to lessen and even annul these taxes, as he needed them not for the maintenance of his household; for he had already abolished, not only all entertainments, but also the luxuries and superfluities of his table, and by these means had considerably diminished the expenses of his palace. The money he thus saved he gave to the needy and to convents and churches. The poor daily received food at his door, and twenty-four of the most miserable of those who assembled there he took to his own table, washed their feet and dismissed them with a piece of money. His own table was plentifully provided, but before he sat down, he sent the tenth part of the food to the houses of the poor and sick. The rest was consumed by strangers and the poor priests who came to Cologne, for whom he always kept open house. He himself partook of so little that it hardly sufficed to keep him alive, and he abstained entirely from all delicacies. He frequently visited the houses of the poorer citizens and gave them rich alms. He built a magnificent hospital for the sick, and endowed it richly. In it he received the aged, or such as were enfeebled by poverty and misery, who found there the most loving care. The zeal of the holy bishop to promote the honor of God and the spiritual welfare of men went so far, that he even built several convents and churches in other dioceses, while he richly endowed others, in order that the clergy might serve the Lord undisturbed by temporal thoughts. One of the most famous of these is the monastery of Siegberg, which he rebuilt for some zealous religious, and endowed with considerable property. He frequently retired to this house, in order to attend to his own soul, far from the distractions of his high dignity. When he left it, he always commended himself and his whole diocese to the prayers of the religious, in which he had the greatest confidence. It is recorded, that in his entire diocese there was not a single convent of which he had not been a benefactor, by enriching it with buildings, increasing its income, or by other gifts, in order that the occupants might praise God more zealously, and obtain the divine blessing for his people. Besides providing for the religious houses, he took care of the churches in and out of the city. He founded several new ones, while he rebuilt and adorned others. The most celebrated of these, in Cologne, are the Collegiate

Church of St. Mary, and the Collegiate Church of St. George, for which he provided so well, that, in each of them, thirty Canons could be maintained. In this manner the holy bishop employed his income. His life was an almost continual mortification of himself; and we can only wonder that the Saint was able to preserve his strength by the little rest he allowed himself, as he passed the greater part of the night, and often the whole of it, in prayer and devout contemplation. He often visited the churches at night barefoot and clad in a rough hair-shirt, or with a sharp-pointed chain around his loins, and, accompanied by a single servant, he there recited his prayers, frequently in a flood of tears.

One day, he found in the street an infant in swaddling clothes. The kind man carried it to his palace, laid it on his own bed, and immediately sent out to seek a nurse, to whom he might give the child in charge. He himself became god-father when it was baptized, and afterwards took care that it was properly educated.

After the Saint had labored long for the honor of God, and for his own salvation and that of others, the Almighty was pleased to give him occasion to exercise Christian patience and fortitude. Anno fell into disgrace with the Emperor, whose misdeeds he had not hesitated to reprove with Episcopal freedom. His own subjects, the inhabitants of Cologne, becoming suspicious of him, revolted against him, and one evening, as he was at supper with the bishop of Munster, they entered the palace, with weapons to kill him. He saved himself by flight, and went to the Church of St. Peter; but not being secure there, he secretly fled from the city and went to Neuss. When those of his flock who lived out of the city heard of it, they came together by thousands, and entering Cologne well armed, they demanded that the people should immediately bring back the innocently banished Saint into the city and his palace, and further, that they should humbly beg his pardon for the wrong they had done him, and give him due satisfaction: otherwise, they would sack the city with fire and sword. The citizens could not resist the power of the armed men, and as they had already come to the knowledge of the wrong they had done, they promised to comply with the request. Thus St. Anno was brought back to his residence, and received with great honors. The holy man showed in this, as well as in other persecutions, a heroic Christian patience and fortitude. He neither complained of the displeasure of the Emperor under which he had fallen, nor of the evil this had drawn upon him, nor of the wickedness of his subjects; but turned his eyes to the Lord, who had permitted all this in order to try him like gold in the fire. Several infirmities and painful maladies gave him

occasion again to exercise himself in patience and endurance ; and in the practice of these virtues he ended his holy life, in 1075, after having governed his See in the most exemplary manner for twenty years. His holy body was carried through all the churches, by the clergy, for seven days, and was at last buried reverentially in the church of the monastery of Siegberg. His tomb is celebrated for the many miracles wrought there.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Damasus, from the depth of his heart, pardoned his enemies the great wrong done to him, and never thought of revenging himself. St. Anno evinced, in all persecutions a heroic patience and fortitude, without uttering a word of complaint, or punishing his offenders. Thus act the true disciples of Christ ; they do not repay evil for evil ; they seek no revenge, but bear wrongs patiently and pardon their persecutors. How do you act when you suffer wrong ? Examine your self to-day in regard to this, and correct yourself where you see you are at fault. Remember the strict, plain and earnest command of Christ, in virtue of which you are obliged to pardon your enemies and persecutors, if you wish God to pardon your transgressions. You have done much greater wrong to the Almighty by your sins, than your enemies and persecutors can ever do to you. Yet you desire that God shall forgive you. How can you then hesitate to pardon the wrong your neighbor has inflicted on you. You say in the Lord's Prayer : " Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them who trespass against us." You ask in these words, that God may pardon you, as you pardon the wrong your neighbor has done to you ; but heed it well : if you do not pardon your neighbor perfectly, with your whole heart, you ask of the Lord, in the words of the above prayer, not

to forgive you. Does not your hair stand on end if you consider this rightly ? Listen to the words of St. Anastasius : " If you do not pardon the wrong done to you, you recite no prayer, but ask and draw down upon yourself the curse of the Almighty, when you say : forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them who trespass against us." St. Chrysostom says the same in the following words : " How dare you raise your hands to heaven, or move your lips to ask pardon ? Should God wish to pardon you, you would prevent Him, so long as you bear malice towards your neighbor." Yes, you even request that He would not forgive you ; because you ask that He would forgive you as you forgive. Now you do not forgive ; hence you ask that He may not forgive you.

II. St. Damasus died in the 81st year of his age ; but he is not a Saint because he lived long, but because he lived a holy life. Holiness and piety lead to heaven, be our life short or long. The years alone have nothing to do with it. Many Saints, confessors and martyrs of both sexes, lived only thirteen, fifteen, or twenty years ; and yet they are greatly revered on account of their virtue and holiness. Many are in hell who lived long in this world. You have, perhaps, no other wish than to live long, and have prayed to God for this favor. My opinion is that you ought rather

to pray for grace to live piously ; for, who knows that a long life will be beneficial to his salvation ! The words of St. Bernard apply well to only too many: " The longer we live, the greater becomes the number of our sins." Many would have died in grace if they had died young ; in later years, they fell into vices and thus went to perdition. "What

avails long life to us," says Thomas à Kempis," if we so little improve our conduct ? Long life, so far from reforming us, only increases the number of our transgressions." According to Holy Writ, Solomon became not wicked until he was old in years. (3 Kings, xi.) Had he not lived so long, he would not have committed such great sins.

TWELFTH DAY OF DECEMBER.

ST. JUDOCUS, PRINCE AND HERMIT; AND ST. ASELLA, VIRGIN.

St. Judocus, greatly celebrated in the seventh century on account of his holiness and the miracles he wrought, was a Royal Prince of Brittany in France. He received his first instructions, according to the custom of the day, in a monastery. He entertained early so strong an aversion to all temporal honors and riches, that he left Brittany, in disguise, with several pilgrims, at a time when his brother intended to give into his hands the government of the kingdom. He went, with his companions, to Paris, whence he wished to retire into a desert to serve the Almighty undisturbed. On the way, he fell in with Haimo, duke of Amiens, who was hunting. Perceiving that the disguised pilgrim was a man of talent, the Duke took him home, promising to have him instructed in theology, and thus prepare him to become a priest, so that he might work more effectually for the honor of God and the salvation of souls. Judocus, by divine inspiration, accepted the offer, and having passed seven years at the court of Haimo, in the study of sacred wisdom and in the exercise of virtue, he was ordained priest. After this, he went with a companion into a forest of Ponthieu, where the duke had a small chapel and a dwelling built for him. There the holy hermit lived an innocent and heavenly life. He fasted daily most severely, and occupied himself with prayer and meditations which he interrupted only to work in order to earn the little food he needed for himself and companion.

He endeavored to conceal himself from the eyes of the world, but God caused him soon to be known by the miracles which he wrought on the infirm. Although his store was but small, he never dismissed a beggar without alms. One day, when all he

possessed was one loaf of bread, a poor man came. The Saint cut the loaf into four pieces, and gave the beggar one of them. Soon after another came, to whom Judocus gave the second piece; and when a third beggar appeared who, to judge by his looks, was still more miserable than the two others, the Saint said: "My dear brother, although we have only half a loaf, we will rob ourselves of it and give it to thee to appease thy hunger." The companion of Judocus became very impatient at these words, and said: "Will you save nothing for us?" Judocus replied: "Give the rest to the poor man; God can send us plenty of food." No sooner had the beggar received the bread than he suddenly disappeared, and it was soon after revealed to the Saint, that Christ Himself had appeared in the garb of a beggar and asked for some bread. Judocus' charity was richly rewarded; for, on the same day, there arrived, on the small stream which flowed near the Saint's dwelling, four boats filled with bread, but without boatmen. Judocus unloaded them with the assistance of his companion, and used the bread as well for himself as for those who came to see him.

Eight years had Judocus passed in this place, when he determined to seek another dwelling, as the people who came daily to see him, disturbed him too much in his devotion. He selected a solitary spot, called Runiac, where he remained fourteen years, and at last left it for the same reason. He then went nearer to the sea into a shady valley. "This shall be my resting-place," said he, on first beholding it: "here will I live; this place I choose as my dwelling." He then had a house built there and two small chapels, one dedicated to St. Paul, the other to St. Peter. Some time afterwards, he made a pilgrimage to Rome, where the Pope received him with great kindness. Being asked by the Holy Father who he was and whence he came, the holy hermit was obliged to reveal what, until then, he had kept a secret, that he was a royal prince, and that to gain the kingdom of heaven, he had renounced a temporal crown. The Pope was greatly astonished at his words and felt the highest esteem for the Saint. After having passed some time at Rome, St. Judocus returned to his solitude, as God had revealed to him that his end was near, and that for the temporal kingdom which he had resigned for the love of God, he would soon gain the eternal. The joy which this promise gave him cannot be described. Having returned to his beloved solitude, he lived five months longer in great austerity and holiness, after which time he became sick. Having received, with indescribable devotion, the holy sacraments, he gave his soul into the keeping of his Redeemer, who appeared to him, accompanied by a great number of Angels.

To this day a well is shown, which the Saint with his staff caused to spring from the ground in order to refresh duke Haimo, when he was almost dead with thirst.



St. Asella, whose festival also occurs in this month, lived at the time of St. Jerome, the great Doctor of the Church, who calls her a model of chastity and a mirror of purity. She was descended from an ancient and noble Roman family, whose name she made still more renowned by her great virtues. Her father dreamed, before she was born, that a beautiful child was presented to him in a vase of clear crystal. And such was St. Asella, not only in regard to her body, but also in regard to her soul. She was hardly twelve years old when she chose Christ as her spouse, and devoted herself entirely to His service. Hence, her great soul despised all that is usually esteemed and coveted by the children of the world. She divested herself of her costly robes, although they were only such as suited her station in life, sold the jewels she wore around her neck, and provided herself with a penitential garment. Thus clad, she showed herself to her parents and relations, to let them understand that she renounced all worldly vanity, and that henceforth she intended, in virginal chastity, to serve the Lord only. No objections of her parents, no remonstrances of her relatives had power to change her resolution. She chose as her dwelling a small room in her father's house, where she lived as retired as a hermit in his cell. Her bed was the bare floor, and her occupations were praying, devout reading, singing psalms, meditations, and at stated hours some needlework. She prayed so incessantly day and night, that after her death, the skin of her knees was found as hard as that of a camel. She never admitted any one of the other sex, and kept such silence that she even endeavored to prevent the occupants of the house from addressing her, as it was more agreeable and comforting to her to converse only with the Almighty and the Saints. She never left her retreat, except to go to church, or to visit the shrines of the holy Martyrs, on which occasions she always wore her humble dress, and was so modest, that she was recognized but by few, and very seldom addressed by any. As she desired to live only for God and be unknown to the world, this gave her great satisfaction. So quiet and holy a conduct of one of the most noble ladies of Rome edified the whole city. But still more to be admired was her austerity in fasting, in which she persevered until her death. St. Jerome testifies that her nourishment, during the whole year,

consisted of a little bread, salt and water, and that she even abstained from this humble fare sometimes for two or three days in succession, while, during Lent, she more than once went without food for a week. And yet, notwithstanding all this austerity, on the testimony of the same holy writer, she was always cheerful and healthy, and never suffered from any sickness. God wished to show in her, how strong even a naturally feeble body may be, when sustained by His grace, and how false is the idea of those, who believe that the fasts ordained by the Church are hurtful to health, or shorten life, although they are far less severe than those observed by St. Asella. Our Saint continued her rigorous and holy life to her fiftieth year, when she closed it by a holy death. St. Jerome, in praising her, calls her "a most perfect mirror of virtues, which should teach all virgins, purity; all married women, modesty; all the wicked, the fear of the Lord; and all priests, perfect piety."

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Judocus renounces a kingdom, retires from the world, goes into a desert and practises good works until his end. St. Asella despises all temporal goods, lives in her father's house as in a desert, and also exercises herself in pious deeds until God calls her. The desire more surely to obtain their salvation, was the motive that actuated both of them. In our day, many imagine they can gain heaven as easily by the unrestrained enjoyment of all the luxuries of a sensual life, full of amusements, idleness and comforts, as the Saints, by their austerity and continual good works, provided that otherwise they live respectably. It is true that to save our souls it is not required that we renounce all that is temporal, nor that we live so strictly in solitude as our Saints did; but it is also true that a respectable life alone suffices not to open for us the gates of heaven. Many heretics, Jews, Turks and heathens, live what is called by the world a respectable life: but who can say

that therefore they gain heaven? The holy Apostle assures us that we cannot please the Almighty without faith. "Faith," says St. Augustine, "is the foundation of all that is good, and the beginning of salvation; without it no one can be numbered among the children of God. Without it no one can justify himself before the Almighty; and without it, no one can possess the life to come." Faith, the true faith, for none other is valued by God, is the great thing necessary to salvation. Without it, a respectable life is not sufficient to gain entrance into the eternal kingdom. But neither is the true faith enough to save us; it is further necessary that we live strictly in accordance with its precepts; that we observe its laws; avoid sin and practise good works; and that if we have become guilty of sin, we repent of it and do penance. Those who know the Gospel, cannot doubt anything of what I have said. Finally it is necessary that we remain in our faith until

the end; in the practice of the laws of our faith; in avoiding sin, and in doing good. If we cease before our death, and leave the path of the true faith and of virtue, we cannot hope to obtain the reward which Christ promised to those only who persevere to the end. All that I have told you now, is eternal truth, according to which you must regulate your life, if you desire to save your soul. Whoever speaks otherwise to you, deceives you: whoever he may be, do not believe him. "If any man cometh to you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into the house, nor say to him, God speed you." (2 John, x.) Listen not to those who speak otherwise; do not believe their words.

II. St. Judocus gives to the beggar a single loaf of bread, and God sends him four boats filled with provisions. Even in this life, God sometimes recompenses those who show themselves charitable to the poor. Some fear that it will impoverish them to assist the needy. But the Holy Ghost has long since assured us of the contrary as we read in Holy Writ: "He that

giveth to the poor shall not want; he that despiseth his entreaty, shall suffer indigence." (Prov. xxviii.) No, he who is charitable to the poor, need not fear that he will lose by it, but he may promise himself, with good reason, God's special blessing. Hence the holy Fathers compare alms with usury, according to the words of Holy Writ: "He that hath mercy on the poor, lendeth to the Lord: and He will repay him." (Prov. xix.) This usury, however, is much more profitable than the usury in which men deal. "In the world," says St. Peter Chrysologus, "we practise usury in such a manner that our profit is one on a hundred; but the Almighty receives one from us, (through the poor,) and gives us one hundred in return." And yet men refuse to negotiate with the Almighty! Perhaps they doubt the security? And why? One man gives another a piece of paper and thus binds himself; and God gives us so many assurances in Holy Writ: how therefore, can we doubt?" I leave you to draw your own conclusions from the above.

THIRTEENTH DAY OF DECEMBER.

ST. LUCY, VIRGIN AND MARTYR; ST. OTHILIA, VIRGIN AND ABBESS.

St. Lucy, one of the most renowned Christian heroines, first saw the light of the world at Syracuse, in Sicily. Her parents were of high rank and very rich; but Lucy cared not for temporal goods, and had already when quite young, vowed herself to the Lord. As her father had died early, her mother desired that she should marry a youth, her equal in rank and fortune, but still a heathen. Lucy was horrified at this proposal; but not to displease her mother by a refusal, she endeavored to delay giving a decisive answer, praying meanwhile to God to aid her.

Her prayer was answered in an unexpected manner. Her mother became sick and needed her daughter's assistance. Already four years had passed, and there was yet no hope of a recovery, when the mother, persuaded by Lucy, allowed herself to be carried to the tomb of St. Agatha, at Catania, which was celebrated for many miracles. On arriving there, Lucy, after long prayers, was overcome by sleep, in which St. Agatha, accompanied by many Angels, appeared to her and said: "What do you request of me, dear sister? Behold your mother is cured! Your faith has worked this miracle. Know then, that as God, for my sake, made Catania glorious, so will He, for your sake, make Syracuse famous; for, you have prepared for Him an agreeable dwelling by vowing your virginity to Him." When Lucy awoke she found her mother, who had been sick so long, entirely restored. Joyfully embracing her, she warmly congratulated her, and after both had given due thanks to the Almighty, they also showed their gratitude to the virgin, St. Agatha. After this, Lucy said to her mother: "I beg of you, dearest mother, speak not to me again of a mortal bridegroom, for I have long since united myself to One who is immortal. I pray you also to give me the portion you would have given me if I had married an earthly bridegroom." The mother, thinking that her daughter would give all to the poor, replied: "If you will wait till after my death, you will be at liberty to do as you like with your inheritance." To this Lucy made answer: "What we leave to the poor after our death is not so agreeable to God, nor so useful to us as what we give them during our life-time; just as a torch which is carried after us is not of the same service as one which is carried before." Moved by these words, the mother promised to accede to all her wishes. Hence, having returned home, she gave Lucy the portion which was due to her, and the holy virgin gave it immediately to the poor.

When the youth who had asked her hand in marriage heard of this, his love was changed into hatred, and he accused her to the Governor, Paschasius, as well for refusing to become his wife, as also for being a Christian and despising the gods. Paschasius called Lucy into his presence, and admonished her to sacrifice to the gods, as well as to keep her promise to the young nobleman. "Neither will be done," replied the virgin; "I sacrifice only to the true God; to Him have I given my faith; not to any man." "I obey the command of the Emperor," replied Paschasius; "you must sacrifice to the gods, and keep your word." "You obey the command of the Emperor," said Lucy, "and I obey the command of God. You fear a mortal man, I fear an immortal God, and Him I will obey." "Your brave

words will cease," said Paschasius, "when your fortitude is tried by tortures." "No," said Lucy, "they will not. The servants of the Lord are never in want of words; for Christ has said to them: 'When you speak to kings and magistrates, do not long consider what and how you say it, for it will be given you what to speak. It is not you who speak, but the Spirit of God speaking through you.'" "Do you pretend to say by this, that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" asked Paschasius. The holy virgin replied: "Those whose life is pure and chaste are a temple of the Holy Ghost." "I shall take care that you be not much longer such a temple," said the Governor; "I will send you into a brothel where you will soon be deprived of your purity." "If my will is not in it," said the chaste virgin, "my purity will be undefiled, even as you can force me to cast incense on the altar before the gods. God judges not by the violence which is done to the body, but by the will. If you cause such violence to be done to me, my chastity will earn a double crown." Paschasius, enraged at these words, commanded her to be taken to a house of iniquity, and there exposed to the wickedness of men. Lucy went forth courageously, full of trust in God, whose aid she implored, into the street; where, suddenly, by the power of the Almighty, she became immovable, so that they could not remove her from the spot notwithstanding all their efforts. They fastened ropes around her, and even yoked several pairs of oxen to them, but all was useless; she stood like a rock and could not be moved. Paschasius ascribed this miracle to witchcraft, and commanded pitch and boiling oil to be poured over her, and set on fire; but she remained unharmed in the midst of the flames. The tyrant could no longer endure to see the fearlessness of the Christian heroine, much less listen to the admonitions which she gave to those around her to forsake idolatry; hence he commanded that a sword should be thrust into her throat to end her life. Sinking to the ground, the Saint closed her eyes in death, and received the crown of martyrdom, in the year of our Lord, 303.

The prophecy that the persecution of the Christians would soon cease, with which she had comforted the faithful shortly before her end, became true. Her holy body was buried at Syracuse. From time immemorial this holy virgin and martyr has been invoked by those who suffer from diseases of the eyes.



To-day the Roman Martyrology records also St. Othilia, whose intercession is likewise invoked in diseases of the eyes.

She was a daughter of Udalrick, Duke of Alsace, but as she was born blind, the barbarous father intended to take her secretly from her mother and have her killed. The mother, aware of his design, gave the child to a faithful nurse and had it secretly carried to Ratisbon. The nurse remained there six years and watched over the little child with the most tender care. Having heard much of the holiness of Erhard, at that time bishop of Ratisbon, she carried Othilia to him, requesting him to baptize the child, and pray that God might give her sight. Othilia was baptized, and God accepting the pious bishop's prayer, gave her eyes the long wished for sight. The nurse then returned with her to her father's house. The mother was inexpressibly happy, and gave thanks to the Almighty; but the father would not recognize her as his child, nor even suffer her in his house. The mother, therefore, to secure a peaceful home and a good education for her daughter, sent her into the Convent of La Baume, where she soon became so devoted to the religious life, that, with her mother's consent, she received the veil. As the convent was very poor, Othilia begged her father to give her a dowry. This her father at first refused; but after some time his heart became softened by the many prayers which Othilia offered for him, and, begging her to forgive his past cruelty, he gave her all his possessions that she might employ them according to her wish to the honor of the Almighty. All he asked of her was that she would pray for him, in order that God might pardon his sins and grant him a happy death. His desire was fulfilled. He soon after died repentant, but appeared after his death to his daughter and informed her that he had still much to suffer in purgatory. The holy daughter ceased not to offer all her prayers and good works for his soul, until she was assured by him in another vision that he was delivered from purgatory. When her mind was at peace on his account, she erected a convent in which one hundred and thirty virgins found a dwelling. Othilia became their abbess, and governed them with great wisdom. To herself she was extremely austere, and fasted very strictly every day except Sundays and Holidays. She never partook of meat and fish, her food consisting of herbs, roots and rye-bread. She did not sleep in a bed, but on a bear-skin spread on the floor. Instead of a pillow she used a stone, while a poor patched dress served her for a covering. To those under her charge, however, she evinced a mother's solicitude as well for their bodily as for their spiritual welfare; and she was in return loved and honored by them as a mother. Having thus passed her life in the service of God, she was called, after a short illness, to receive her eternal reward. Before and after her death God glorified her by many miracles.

She is yet greatly honored in Alsace, especially on Mount Othilia, which is so called in her honor.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Impress deeply into your heart three memorable sayings of St. Lucy. The first regards almsgiving before death. This is much more agreeable to the Almighty, and much more useful to you than to give after your death. May you choose what is most agreeable to God and most useful to yourself. The second is the answer which she gave to Paschasius: "You obey the command of the Emperor, and I, the command of God. You fear a mortal man, and I fear the immortal God; Him I must obey." May you act according to these words. Keep the commandments of the Lord, for He can truly be more useful to you, and harm you more than all mortal men. The third is comprised in the following words: "Those whose life is chaste, are a temple of the Holy Ghost." For whom then are the unchaste a dwelling? Surely, for no one else than the spirit of hell. Should not this thought alone awaken in you the greatest horror for the vice of unchastity, and an especial love for the virtue of purity?

Besides these three maxims, consider how miraculously St. Lucy was strengthened and protected by the power of God, in such a manner that no force could move her from where she stood. Endeavor, at least, to be immovable in your intention, to live more piously, and to shun sin, especially that sin to which you are most addicted. In order not to become guilty of it again, you ought to stand as immovable as a rock in the sea. Let prayer and trust in God be your help, as they were St. Lucy's. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye

steadfast and immovable," says St. Paul. (1 Cor. xv.)

II. The life of St. Othilia has shown you how powerful her prayers were with God. She obtained for her father the grace of conversion; and after his death, she relieved him from purgatory. You sometimes marvel that your prayers have not the desired effect. But you have no reason to wonder; you should much rather be astonished if they were answered. Tell me, do you not generally pray in such a manner that you do not even think of what you ask? Your thoughts wander, and hardly one of them is intent upon what you desire to obtain from God. You are not thinking of what you say, or to whom you are speaking; neither do you manifest any reverence in your prayers. Is it therefore to be wondered at when so miserable a prayer is unanswered? Perform it in future with more attention and devotion, and you may have more hope to receive from God what you ask for. St. Ephrem says: "If you desire to speak with God, pay attention." "If you would be heard by Him, first hear yourself what you would say. I greatly offend the Almighty, if I desire Him to hear a prayer which I do not hear myself," says St. Bernard. St. Chrysostom writes: "Speaking to a friend, you are attentive to him; but speaking to God, and asking Him to pardon your sins, your thoughts are on your business, or on other matters. What power can such a prayer have? or, rather, what punishment does it not deserve?"

FOURTEENTH DAY OF DECEMBER.

ST. SPIRIDION, BISHOP.

St. Spiridion, who was greatly celebrated for his prophecies and miracles, was born about the middle of the third century, in the island of Cyprus. When a boy, he kept his father's sheep. In this humble occupation he remained many years, leading an innocent, pious life, and passing many hours in prayer, and in the contemplation of heavenly things. He did not associate with those of his equals who were frivolous in their sports, or not reserved in their actions. He was especially a great lover of peace and harmony, and was never heard contending with anyone, or contradicting those who were prone to strife and contention. By silence and gentleness he endeavored to prevent those evils which are the result of contention. When he perceived that persons were embittered against each other, he endeavored, in every possible manner, to reconcile them. To fulfil the wishes of his parents, he married a pious woman, who bore him two children. After this, the couple lived in continence. During the persecution under the Emperor Galerius, Spiridion was arrested as a Christian, and had his right eye put out and the sinews of his left leg severed, and was then condemned, with many others, to work in the mines. When, in the reign of Constantine the Great, he was released from this hard labor, he returned to his former occupation, and attended to his pious exercises with the same zeal as of old. At that time, God made him famous by miracles. Thieves came during the night to rob the pious shepherd; but when they wished to depart with their booty, they could not move from the place. The Saint, finding them early in the morning, reproved them, but also said a prayer that God would restore to them the use of their limbs. He then dismissed them, with the present of a lamb, in reward, as he pleasantly added, for their having so carefully watched his flock all night. At another time, a merchant had bought a certain number of goats from him, but intended to take one more than he had paid for. The goat, however, would not go with the others, but ran back immediately. The thief then took it on his shoulders, but could not carry it away. St. Spiridion said to him: "My friend, the goat knows well that you have not paid for it, and hence will not go with you. Pay for it, and it will give you no further trouble." The merchant did so, and the goat went quietly away with the others. These and many other miracles were soon known; and the result was that when

the clergy and laity of Tremithus were to elect a new bishop, they all, inspired by God, suddenly exclaimed, that they desired no one but Spiridion as bishop. The Saint opposed this choice in his humility, but at length he had to submit to the will of God.

The Almighty, who reveals to the humble what He conceals from the knowledge of the wise, had gifted this holy shepherd with so great a wisdom, that priests and bishops were astonished at his words. He administered his new functions most perfectly, preaching with great zeal, and visiting, comforting and instructing those under him with indefatigable love and solicitude. He strengthened them in their faith, and led them, both by word and example, in the path of Christian virtues. He exhorted them most earnestly to avoid sin, and when they had become guilty of it, to do penance. He gave the greater portion of his income to the poor. He possessed in a wonderful degree, the power of working miracles. One day, as he was going to church, he met a woman, who had a dead child in her arms. Seeing the Saint, the woman sank upon her knees, and laying the dead child at the bishop's feet, she implored him to restore it to life. Deeply pitying the grief of the mother, he prayed, and immediately life returned into the body of the child. The mother's joy, on beholding her child open its eyes, was so overwhelming, that she sank dead to the ground. To give to the living child a mother, the Saint, at the prayers of those present, performed a second miracle by raising the mother to life.

One of the Saint's friends had been falsely accused and was in the greatest danger of being put to death. In this emergency he wrote to the Saint, who was far away, requesting his assistance. Spiridion set out immediately with a companion, but before long, came to a brook that was so much swollen that he could not cross it. Full of trust in God, the Saint made the sign of the holy cross over the torrent; whereupon the waters were immediately divided, so that the bishop and his companion walked over the bed of the stream with dry feet. How famous the Saint became by all these miracles may easily be imagined. He gained still greater celebrity by the following occurrence. With other bishops, he was present at the General Council of Nice, when several cunning Arians, as well as infidel philosophers, endeavored to defend their doctrines, and to contest the articles of the Catholic faith. One of these philosophers boasted excessively of his knowledge, saying that none of the bishops present could convict him of an error. Several of the prelates disputed with him, and laid his errors before him; but he always found a subterfuge, and would not acknowledge himself con-

quered. At length St. Spiridion rose and said: "In the name of Christ, I beseech you to listen to me, and to hear from my lips the truth. There is only one God, one Creator of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. There is only one Son, begotten of God the Father, who has redeemed us, &c." Thus the holy man continued, reciting the articles of the Christian faith, without making the slightest comment on them, or giving the smallest explanation of them. Having finished, he asked: "What have you to say now? Have I spoken the truth or not? What have you to object?" The philosopher stood like a statue, unable to utter a word in his defence. At length he said: "I believe all that you have said." "If you really believe all this, come with me into the Church, and receive holy baptism," said St. Spiridion. Some of those present thought that the philosopher was deriding the Saint; but when they saw that he was in earnest, they evinced their astonishment that the simple truth of Spiridion had wrought what their erudition had failed to do. The philosopher said: "My brethren, I have lost. So long as men were my opponents, I remained master; but when Divine Wisdom spoke to me through its servant, I could no longer dispute. I am convinced; God has spoken to me through His servant." The philosopher received holy baptism, and from a persecutor of the Christian faith, he became its warm defender; from being a Saul, he became a Paul. The whole assembly of bishops gave thanks to God for so wonderful a conversion, and esteemed St. Spiridion more highly than before. After the death of Constantine the Great, Spiridion was called to Antioch, where the Emperor Constantius was lying dangerously sick. The Saint went in his usual poor attire to the palace, where the soldier on duty, not knowing him, pushed him aside and buffeted him. The Saint, not in the least angry, presented his other cheek, which brought the rough soldier to the knowledge and regret of his fault. Admitted to the Emperor, the Saint had hardly finished a short prayer, which he recited for his health, when the Emperor arose from his bed, perfectly cured. He offered a large sum of money to the Saint, as a sign of his gratitude, but the bishop refused to receive it, giving him, in return, many wholesome admonitions. The Emperor promised to follow them, and compelled the Saint to receive at least a portion of the offered money, which, however, immediately on leaving the palace, the holy man divided among the poor, and returned to his bishopric, where, before his end, he performed several other miracles. His prayers obtained rain from God when the island of Cyprus was ravaged by famine, in consequence of a long-continued drought. At last, the Almighty was

pleased to call this great Thaumaturgus, by a calm and happy death, to His eternal kingdom. Many and great miracles continued to be wrought for many years at his tomb.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. You must have remarked that, from the beginning of his life, St. Spiridion loved peace, avoided contention, and endeavored to reconcile those who were embittered against each other. Imitate him in this. Christ several times wished peace to His disciples, because He desires His followers to live peacefully together. Love and peace He gave as a distinguishing mark to His disciples. If you therefore wish to belong to the disciples of Christ, love peace and harmony. Guard yourself against making disturbance by gossip, or in other way. Should you perceive that others wish to quarrel with you, restrain yourself; leave, or be silent. Oh! how many sins you will thus be able to prevent. If you have an opportunity to make peace between persons at variance, do not neglect it. Christ has said: "Blessed are the peacemakers;" and His adding that "they shall be called the children of God," leaves us to conclude what they must be who disturb peace, and arouse strife and contention. St. Gregory writes on this subject: "Those who occasion strife and contention ought to know what is written: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." When those who make peace are called children of God, we must surely look upon those who disturb peace and cause strife and contention, as children of the devil. St. Vincent Ferrer writes: "If they are blessed who love peace, they that disturb it must be cursed."

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Now, where do the cursed belong? where the children of Satan? Children belong to their parents; hence the peacemaker to God; the peace-disturber to the devil. The blessed, the chosen, belong to heaven; the reprobate, the cursed, to hell.

II. St. Spiridion commended nothing oftener nor more earnestly to those under his charge than to avoid sin; or, if they had been guilty of it, to do penance. These two important points I have several times during the year advised you to observe. To-day I repeat it. If it be your earnest desire to be saved, avoid sin; for this alone can close the gates of heaven against you, and cast you into hell. Should you, however, have fallen into sin, I beseech you, for the sake of your own salvation, do not remain in it, but endeavor to cleanse yourself by true repentance. Ask God, before you lie down to-night, to forgive you your iniquities, and atone for them by a contrite confession. Do not postpone your penance from day to day, from week to week, from month to month, from year to year, still less until your old age, or until you are sick, perhaps, even dying; for this manner of acting is very displeasing to God and very dangerous to you. How would you like your servant to say to you: "As long as I am young and strong and active, I will serve your enemies; but when I become old, feeble and infirm, I will be faithful to you." This would be more than displeasing to you, would it

not? How then do you dare to act in the same manner towards your God? As long as you remain in sin, you serve Satan, the enemy of the Almighty; and when you will have served him long enough, you intend to enter into the service of the Most High. How great an injury to God! How terrible a contempt for His high Majesty! and how dangerous to yourself! For, tell me, are there not a hundred, nay, a thousand chances that you will die before the time comes that you have appointed for your penance? Should you die without penance, you know that nothing is surer for you than hell. As long, therefore, as you continue in your sins, so long are you in evident danger of going to eternal ruin. And is it possible that you do not tremble merely to think of such danger? But let us suppose that you do not die, and that you make a confession in the last hour of your life; are you sure that you will escape hell in such a manner? St. Salvian feared the contrary, as in such a confession it is hard to find true repentance. He who postpones his penance voluntarily until his last hour, will continue to sin as long as he can. He will not cease to do evil through a desire to reform, but because he can sin no longer. He leaves not sin, but sin leaves him. I ask, what kind of contrition can

such a person experience? what resolutions can he make? And to what use is confession without true repentance, and without an earnest resolution of amendment? "He that does penance while he has the power or the means to sin, has reasonable hope to gain life everlasting when he dies. But whoever lives in sin and does no penance till his last hour has arrived, can hardly expect that his sins will be forgiven, and that he will be admitted into the presence of the Lord. Those, therefore, who desire to die happily must do penance while they are in health." Thus speaks St. Bernard. Heed this lesson. Not to do penance until the last hour of life, is a dangerous thing. Do it now without loss of time. Do not even postpone it until to-morrow, because it is uncertain whether you will live until then. "Should I offer you money, you would not say, 'I will come to-morrow,' but you would receive it immediately. God offers you the pardon of your sins; why do you not hasten to receive it?" says St. Ambrose. In conclusion, listen to the admonition of St. Paul: "Let not sin remain in your mortal body." (Romans, vi.) Ponder it well: "in your mortal body." You are mortal; you may die in your sin; hence, do not allow it to rest upon your conscience but do penance.

FIFTEENTH DAY OF DECEMBER.

ST. CHRISTIANA, SERVANT.

The Roman Martyrology writes of St. Christiana as follows: "In Armenia, on the other side of the Black Sea, the feast of the holy servant, Christiana, who, at the time of Constantine, converted the people of that country to the Christian faith, by the power of

the miracles God wrought through her." These few words contain much that is great and wonderful. Jesus Christ, who, while on earth, chose twelve Apostles to convert many cities, lands and kingdoms, chose, at the time of Constantine the Great, an humble servant-girl, to convert an entire kingdom to the true faith. This happened thus. The infidels, who dwelt in the interior of Armenia, had made an inroad into the neighboring Christian states, and had taken Christiana, otherwise called Nina, prisoner. They sold her in Armenia as a slave, and to make her misfortune still greater, her masters at first treated her most cruelly, gave her labor that was beyond her strength, and scarcely allowed her a moment of rest. Notwithstanding these hardships, Christiana submitted to the decrees of Providence, and in her misery and captivity, she obeyed her savage masters, for the love of God, without complaint or murmur, and bore all her sufferings patiently. In the very midst of paganism, she remained constant in her faith and led the life of a true Christian. Although ceaselessly at work, she never omitted her prayers, but performed them most devoutly, not only mornings and nights, but also during the day, whenever it was possible to do so. The days appointed by the Catholic Church for fasting and abstinence she observed most carefully, adding to them many fasts of her own free will. Although she had constantly to be in the midst of people full of vice, her conduct was angelical in modesty and purity. The heathens soon perceived that her life was different from theirs, and asked why it was so. Her reply was: "I am a Christian, and as such, am bound to serve Christ, the true God, in all I do." Making use of this opportunity, she spoke to them of the Saviour, of whom the barbarians had never heard.

The son of king Mirian, who reigned over the entire land, became sick some time after; and, according to the custom of the country, the child was taken from house to house, and everyone was asked for a remedy to cure him. They came to the house where Christiana served, and asked her if she knew any remedy that would restore the prince to health. Her answer was that she did not know anything that would be beneficial to him. Inspired, however, by the Almighty, she took the sick child in her arms, and having laid him upon a penitential cloth of woven camel's hair, she prayed, with all the trust of a believing heart, to our Lord and Redeemer for him. And behold, the prince immediately recovered, and was carried back to his father's palace with great rejoicing. The fame of this miracle spread over the entire kingdom, and caused the Christian faith to be greatly esteemed. Not long after this, the queen herself became very

sick, and suffered great pains. Immediately sending one of her servants to Christiana, she requested the Saint to come and see her. The humble maid politely excused herself from obeying the queen's command. The latter, therefore, was carried to the hut of Christiana, where she besought the holy servant to restore her to health. Christiana replied, that she had not power to do this, but would pray for her to the true God. She did so with great faith, and the queen's pain immediately ceased and her health was restored. The queen gave thanks to the handmaid of the Lord, and promised her a rich reward; but Christiana, improving the opportunity, explained to her who Christ was, whose aid she had requested for her and her son. When the queen had returned to the court in perfect health, and had told the king how and by whom she had been cured, the latter sent a large sum of money and other gifts to Christiana. She, however, returned all to him, saying that she was, in Christ and through Christ, rich enough, and that she expected still greater riches in heaven, adding that her greatest happiness upon earth would be to see the king and queen converted to the God who had restored both the queen and the young prince to health. The king seemed not unwilling to become a Christian, and the queen spared no pains to persuade him; but hearing that his conversion might cause a revolt among his people, he remained in the blindness of idolatry until the Almighty saw fit to use other means to open his eyes. He was one day hunting with his courtiers, when suddenly a dense fog descended from the mountains, while, at the same time, the sky was so covered with heavy, dark clouds, that day seemed to have been turned into night. All were greatly frightened and fled away in all directions, leaving the king entirely alone. He sought a way to escape, but found none, and the fear of being attacked by wild beasts increased his terror. In this anxiety he called loudly on his gods for aid, naming one after another; but all his prayers were in vain. Seeing that his gods had forsaken him, he turned to the God whom the pious Christiana had addressed, and promised to recognize and confess Him, without farther hesitation, as the only true God, if He would save him from this danger. Hardly had the king made this promise, when the mist and darkness fled as suddenly as they had appeared, leaving the sky brighter and clearer than it had been before. The king returned to his palace, related the event to his spouse, sent for the Christian servant, announced to her his resolution and the promise he had made, and requested to be instructed in the Christian faith. Christiana was inexpressibly happy, and began forthwith to explain to him the mysteries of her faith, in which she was well

instructed, desiring, at the same time, that the king should build a church in honor of the true God.

The king, who was greatly delighted with the Christian faith, called first the nobility and then the people together, and related to them what had happened to the prince, the queen and himself, and said that, in consequence, he had determined to embrace Christianity. All manifested great satisfaction at the king's resolution, and promised to follow his example. Hence, the building of a church was immediately commenced and continued with great zeal. A new miracle which took place strengthened all in their good resolutions. Already two high columns had been raised to support the roof of the sacred edifice, but with the third they encountered great difficulty, and notwithstanding all the pains they took, they could not succeed in raising it. Meanwhile night came on, the laborers went home, and only Christiana remained upon the spot, praying to God that He would assist with His grace this work which was undertaken to honor His holy Name. God heard the prayer of His handmaid. When day broke, the people saw with amazement that the third column had been raised without having been touched by a human hand. The rest of the work was accomplished without difficulty, which caused great rejoicing, and increased the eagerness of the people to receive holy baptism. Christiana had already advised the king to send a deputation to Constantine the Great, to make an alliance with him, and request him to send some teachers of the Christian faith to his dominions. The king followed this advice, and Constantine sent several apostolic men, who instructed the king and his people in the Christian religion, and received them into the Church of Christ by holy baptism. In this manner the entire land was converted through the means of one pious servant. How long Christiana lived after she had accomplished this great deed is not known, but there is no doubt that she ended her pious life by a holy death.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. St. Christiana, in all her hardships, willingly submitted to the decrees of the Almighty, and profiting by her misery, captivity, work and suffering, neither complained nor murmured against God or men. Oh! that all domestics would follow the example of this holy virgin. Although neither in</p>	<p>slavery nor captivity, yet they have to suffer much hardship, especially if their masters are hard and merciless. Many become impatient, discontented with their lot, and imagine that they are the most unhappy of all men. Hence they complain, and murmur not only against men, but also against the Almighty.</p>
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They seek to rid themselves of their supposed miseries by rash and imprudent marriages. And how many servants are guilty of great sin before they attain this object! But are they happier by this change? have they bettered themselves? Daily experience and repentance that comes too late prove the contrary. I beg of you, dear reader, should God have placed you among servants, to be content with the divine decree. Make a virtue of necessity, and profit by your work with Christian patience. "Wast thou called being a bondman? care not for it," says St. Paul. (I Cor. vii.) This means, be not sorrowful, nor troubled, nor low-spirited; but believe that this station was the one in which God foresaw that you could be most easily saved. He did not place you there for your punishment, but for your good; and it is not in the eyes of the Almighty what it is in the eyes of the world. Christ, the Lord, Himself honored this station, and preferred it to all others; for according to the words of the holy Apostle, He took the form of a servant, and not of a great Lord; and He says, that He did not come to be ministered unto, but to minister, (Matth. xx.) You can, in this station, live as piously, and as surely go to heaven as a religious in his convent, a hermit in his desert: but you can much more easily live piously in it, and much more easily gain life everlasting than the greatest Lords or Ladies in the world. What else can you desire?

II. St. Christiana most willingly obeyed her savage masters out of love to God. A voluntary obedience must be the virtue of a Christian servant: but he must not only practise this when his masters are kind and good, but also when they are unkind and violent. "Servants,"

exhorts St. Paul, "be obedient to them that are your Lords according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the simplicity of your heart, as to Christ: not serving to the eye, as it were pleasing men, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart." (Eph. vi.) St. Peter says: "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward." (I. Peter, ii.) In these words is announced to servants the divine command. You must obey your masters, but you must do this willingly. In order to obey willingly, obey for the love of God; think that you serve the Lord; that God asks of you what your master commands, if it is nothing wrong; and that God Himself will reward you, as St. Paul says in the following words: "Know that thou wilt receive the reward of the inheritance of the Lord. Serve Christ the Lord!" (Ephes. vi.) Whoever considers this rightly will willingly obey. St. Christiana was obliged to live among heathens, but did not allow herself to be disturbed in the exercise of her religious duties, but practised them without fear. Should Catholic servants be obliged by necessity to serve for a time in non-Catholic families, they must omit nothing that the Catholic faith and the Catholic Church require of them. In word and deed they must confess their faith and not allow themselves to be misled either by the derision, laughter or persuasions of those who are not of their own faith. They must not read the prayer-books or hymns, the catechisms or bibles of their masters; nor dispute with them about religion. To remain longer than is necessary in such a service can seldom be done without committing sin and being in danger of losing one's soul. St. Christiana lived among the most

unchaste people, and yet remained innocent and pure. If you cannot escape the society of such people, pray fervently to the Lord, and earnestly do all in your power. God will, in that case, surely protect you, and your conscience will remain pure from sin. St. Christiana worked miracles by her prayers, she received from God what she asked. And why? Because she prayed with great trust in God, with due devotion and reverence. This is the manner in which you have to perform your prayers, if you desire anything of God. Pray with attention and deep reverence, with a clean heart and great confidence. If you are in mortal sin,

without repenting of it, or if you offend the Lord daily, how can you expect that He will give you what you ask? "How shall God hear us," asks Origen, "if we do not hear Him? How can we hope that He will do what we wish, if we do not His will?" In like manner speaks St. Salvian, saying: "We say that we honor God, and yet obey Satan, and though we add evil to evil, we wish that God should do good to us. We desire that God should grant our wishes, while we are not willing to do His will." "Dearly beloved, if our heart do not reprehend us, we have confidence towards God. And whatever we shall ask we shall receive of him." (I. John, iii.)

SIXTEENTH DAY OF DECEMBER.

THE THREE COMPANIONS OF THE HOLY PROPHET DANIEL, ANANIAS, AZARIAS AND MISAEI.

The Roman Martyrology speaks to-day of the three companions of the holy prophet Daniel, and as Holy Writ relates the wonderful events of their lives it is but right that we also should remember them on this day. Nabuchodonosor, the idolatrous king of Babylon, besieged Jerusalem at the time when Joakim, king of Judæa, reigned there. The Almighty, angry because of the iniquity of the people, permitted the king of Babylon to take the city, to make Joakim and many others prisoners, and to carry them away into Chaldæa. As many of the prisoners were of royal and princely blood, the king wished to have them wait upon him. Asphenez, the Lord Chamberlain, was ordered to select some of them, who were well-formed and instruct them in the Chaldean language and other knowledge. These were to be fed for three years from the royal table, and then to serve the king. Asphenez chose, from among the prisoners, Daniel and three others, named Ananias, Azarias and Misael; but he changed their names, calling Daniel, Baltassar; Ananias, Sidrach; Misael, Misach; and Azarias, Abednago. When they heard that they were to be fed from the royal table, and hence, that such food would be given them as the divine law forbade them to touch,

they entreated the Chamberlain to excuse them on account of this reason. The Chamberlain replied : " I fear my Lord the King, who has appointed you meat and drink ; for if he should see your faces leaner than those of the other youths, who eat of the appointed food, you shall endanger my head to the King." Daniel said : " Try, I beseech thee, thy servants for ten days, and let vegetables be given us to eat and water to drink. And look upon our faces and the faces of those who eat of the king's meat, and as thou shalt see, so deal with thy servants." Daniel spoke thus, knowing that the fulfilment of the divine laws would not be detrimental to their well-being, as health and beauty do not come from the food only, but are principally a gift from God. The issue showed how rightly Daniel had judged ; for, after the expiration of ten days, it was manifest that both he and his three companions had increased more in strength and beauty than all the children who were fed from the royal table. Praising the Almighty, they continued to avoid the forbidden food that had been appointed to them.

At last, when the time arrived at which all those chosen for the service of the king should be presented to him, Daniel and his companions were preferred before all the others. The king, on speaking to them, found that they outshone all others in learning, and was greatly pleased with them, and kept them near his person. Soon after, it happened that Daniel interpreted a dream of the king so wisely, that he was made Governor over all the provinces of Babylon and chief over all the wise men. On this occasion, Daniel requested the king to promote his three companions also, which accordingly was done. Some time later, the king, inflated by pride, desired to be honored like a god, and erected a great golden statue representing himself. All magistrates, judges and rulers were to appear on a day appointed, and they were commanded, at a given signal, to fall down and worship this statue. To this command was added the menace that those who refused to obey, should be cast into a burning furnace. All prostrated themselves and worshipped the statue, except the three noble companions of Daniel, who would not obey, but stood boldly upright, while all others were bending their knees. The king was immediately informed of this, and, full of wrath, he ordered the three youths into his presence and asked them : " Is it true that you do not worship my gods, nor adore the golden statue that I have set up ? Now I command you, that at whatever hour you hear the sound of the trumpet and other musical instruments, you prostrate yourselves and adore the statue that I have made. But if you do not adore it, in the same hour, you shall be cast into the fiery furnace. And who is the God that

shall deliver you out of my hands?" To this blasphemous speech, the three youths answered fearlessly: "We need not answer you concerning this matter. For behold, the God whom we worship is able to save us from the fiery furnace and to deliver us out of thy hands, O king! But if he will not, be it known to thee, O king, that we will not worship thy gods nor adore the golden statue which thou hast set up." This fearless answer aroused still more the king's wrath, and he commanded that the furnace should be heated seven times more than it had been heated, and that without delay the three youths should be cast into it. The command was immediately obeyed; but the flames seized the men who cast the pious youths into the furnace, and destroyed them immediately, while the three youths themselves remained unharmed. An angel of the Lord appeared and drove the flames out of the furnace; and creating a soft breath, he protected them from the fire in such a manner that they were not even touched by it. The three heroes, seeing themselves so wonderfully protected by the Almighty, began loudly to praise the Lord. They invited not only all the Angels of heaven, but also all other creatures to praise the Lord. This magnificent hymn of praise is to be found in Holy Writ, and is daily recited in the breviary of the holy Church. Nabuchodonosor was greatly astonished at this miracle, especially as he perceived that the youths, who had been cast bound into the furnace, walked through it, free and unfettered; and that they were accompanied by a fourth person, who, according to his own words, looked like an angel. Hence he went to the door of the furnace, and said: "Sidrach, Misach and Abdenago, ye servants of the Most High God, come forth!" They came, and princes and judges, and all that surrounded the king, regarded them one after another attentively and saw with astonishment that the flames had not touched their bodies, nor even singed a hair upon their heads, nor left the smell of fire upon them. Then the king, no longer able to contain himself, broke forth into praising the Lord in the following words: "Blessed be the God of all Gods, the God of Sidrach, Misach and Abdenago, who sent his angel and has delivered his servants who believed in him!" Not satisfied with this confession and praise of the true God, the king commanded that nobody in his kingdom should in future blaspheme the God of these three youths; "for," said he, "there is no other God who can save in this manner!" He showed more favor than before to these three fearless confessors of the Lord and promoted them to higher offices.

Holy Writ testifies to this great miracle. St. Chrysostom finds not words enough to praise the unconquerable heroism of

these youths, but teaches at the same time, that Christians should follow their example, and not allow respect of persons or fear of temporal evil to keep them from obeying the divine commandments, or make them transgress the laws of God.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS. •

This whole history is a grand instruction to observe firmly the divine laws and never to abandon them. Consider, however, especially the two following points.

I. The three youths and their holy instructor, the prophet Daniel, do not allow themselves to be persuaded to partake of the meats of the royal table; for, this was forbidden by the law of the Lord. When the royal officer feared that worse nourishment would make them sick or weak, they requested him to allow them to try it for ten days; and at the end of this time, they looked fairer and more healthy than those who had eaten from the royal table; which clearly shows that health and a fair form are not the result of food, but are given by God. There are people who make a pretext of their weakness to be excused from fasting or abstaining according to the laws of the Church. They fear that it will be detrimental to their health. Hence they dispense themselves, or ask a dispensation from the ecclesiastical authorities. They ought not to believe their self-love so easily, but first make a trial to ascertain if it really is as they say. For, it is well known that with most of them it is pure imagination, and not a well-grounded fear. Hence, if they dispense themselves, or ask from the ecclesiastical authority a dispensation and make use of it, they will not be able to give an account of it to the Lord who sees into the heart, and who judges not by human imaginings, but according to the truth. Neither

the testimony of the physician, who judges by what they say, nor the dispensation of the ecclesiastical authorities can protect them. To such people we can rightly say what Albert the Great said to a certain Canon, who excused his possessing several ecclesiastical prebends, by a papal dispensation. "Before," said he, "you would have gone to hell without the dispensation; but now, you will go to hell with it."

II. The three companions of the holy Prophet Daniel said to the king who blasphemed the true God and His power: "Our God, whom we worship, is able to save us out of thy hands, O King! But if He will not, be it known to thee, O King, that we will not worship thy gods:" words that should cheer you and give you strength in adversity and sorrow. The Evil one may perhaps whisper to you: "Behold, your prayers are not regarded by God. God has forgotten you. He will not come to your aid." Or perhaps Satan may advise you to make use of superstitious means in your sickness. Under such circumstances, take courage, and say confidently: "The God whom I worship, and on whom I can call, can save me; can help me; can cure my sickness. Should He, for reasons known to Him alone, not hear my prayer, yet will I not leave Him, nor murmur against His decrees. I will not use superstitious means, nor in any other manner offend Him, but will bear patiently all that He sends." Such trust in the

Almighty and such true love of Him, will move Him to assist you much sooner than if you leave off praying, or murmur, or in any other way sin against Him. You have an example in the three heroes whom God, to increase their glory, shielded in the midst of the flames	and rescued from the fire of the furnace. "He comes to help those who put their trust in him," says the holy Prophet Daniel. (Daniel, xiii.) And the Psalmist sings: "Mercy will surround him"—protect him on all sides—"who trusts in the Lord. (Psalm xxxi.)
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SEVENTEENTH DAY OF DECEMBER.

ST LAZARUS, BISHOP OF MARSEILLES.

In the Roman Martyrology, appears to-day the name of St. Lazarus, whom our dear Lord raised from the dead. He was the brother of Martha and Mary, who from the castle in which she lived after the death of her parents, was called Magdalen. Lazarus was born in Bethany, a hamlet not far from Jerusalem, and was greatly esteemed by the Jews, as well on account of his noble lineage, as for his considerable possessions. When Lazarus came to the knowledge of the Lord is not distinctly known, but it is believed, and not without reason, that it happened soon after Christ began to preach and to work miracles; for, his heart seems to have been open to receive the truth, and our Saviour seems to have given him marks of special favor. As he had long waited for the Messiah, and was prepared for His coming, God gave him the grace to recognize Him in Christ, by the fame which His miracles acquired and also by attending to His divine teachings. No sooner had Lazarus recognized in Christ the promised Redeemer, than he joined Him and was eager to follow Him with other disciples. It is plainly seen from the Gospel, that Christ loved him; he called him "a friend." "Lazarus, our friend, sleepest." The two sisters had announced the sickness of their brother to Christ in these words: "Behold he whom thou lovest is sick." The cause of Christ's special love for Lazarus, according to the Holy Fathers, is the same that made the Apostle John so dear to the Lord, namely, chastity, which Lazarus preserved undefiled. Christ often made his abode at Bethany in the house of Lazarus and Martha, and many Fathers of the Church think that Magdalen, their sister, who for a time led quite a different life from theirs, obtained by the intercession of Lazarus and Martha the grace of conversion. The most memorable event in the life of Lazarus, is his being raised from the dead,

which St. John, in the XI.th Chapter of the Gospel, has circumstantially related. The facts are as follows: Towards the end of Christ's 33d year, Lazarus became very sick, and his two sisters immediately sent a messenger to Jesus, to inform Him of it. Christ, however, remained two days longer in the place where He was, and when He came to Bethany, Lazarus was already dead and buried. No sooner had Martha heard of the Lord's arrival, than she went to meet Him, saying: "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died; but now also, I know that whatever thou wilt ask of God he will give it thee." Similar words were spoken by Mary Magdalen, who, called by her sister, came to Him weeping bitterly. Christ, the Lord, seeing the tears of both sisters, and of many others who were present, wept with them; from which the Jews concluded that He must have loved Lazarus greatly; hence they said: "Behold how he loved him." Meanwhile, Jesus went to the sepulchre of Lazarus and ordered the stone which closed the entrance to be removed. After this, raising His eyes to heaven, He said: "Father, I give thee thanks that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always; but because of the people who stand about have I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me." Having said these words, He cried with a loud voice: "Lazarus, come forth!" Hardly had Christ pronounced these words, when Lazarus came forth from the grave, his hands and feet bound with winding sheets, and his face covered with a napkin. Christ told His disciples to loose him and let him go. All present were witnesses of this miracle, and many acknowledged the true Messiah. It is easy to conceive how humbly Lazarus and his two sisters thanked the Lord for the great benefit which He had bestowed upon them. The fame of this great miracle soon spread all over Jerusalem and the surrounding country. The Pharisees and High Priests were filled with wrath against Christ and Lazarus, as they perceived that this event would greatly increase Christ's influence. Hence, they assembled in a council to consider how they should act. Caiaphas, the High Priest, said without hesitation: "Christ must be put to death, otherwise the people will be lost. It is more expedient," said he, "that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." All present joined Caiaphas, and resolved to put Christ to death. Some time after the Resurrection of Christ the Jewish priests resolved to destroy every living witness of His divine mission, and, therefore, ardently desired the death of Lazarus. The question was only how they could best accomplish their plans. They did not dare to put Lazarus to death by violence, as he was a man of high consideration, and greatly

esteemed by the people. They could accuse him of no crime to cover their wickedness. Therefore, all they could do was to seize an opportunity, for which they had not to wait long. As most of the Christians, after the death of St. Stephen, had either been banished from the city, or had fled away, Lazarus, his sisters, and some other Christians had repaired to Joppa, a town on the sea-coast. No sooner were the Pharisees informed of this, than they sent some soldiers after them, who took Lazarus, his sisters, and other Christians, placed them in an old, decayed boat, and sent them adrift without sails or oars, supposing that, in a few hours, the boat and those in it would perish. To save the boat was beyond all human power; but Providence, having decreed that Lazarus should go to France, guided the boat safely to the port of Marseilles. The inhabitants of this celebrated town were heathens, but they cultivated good manners, and were lovers of the arts and sciences. Witnessing so miraculous a voyage, they were deeply touched, and they concluded that the faith which Lazarus had so miraculously brought to them must be divine. Lazarus, who had already been consecrated bishop by the Apostles, began forthwith to administer his functions with zeal, as well in Marseilles as in the surrounding country. As the Almighty had also bestowed upon him the power to work miracles, the number of the faithful increased in a short time so much, that, besides the new churches that were built, the magnificent temple of the goddess Diana was consecrated by Lazarus to the service of the Most High. For thirty years, Lazarus guarded his flock as a faithful shepherd, and had the happiness to see the number of the Christians increased to many thousands, where, when he landed, there had been no knowledge of the true God. At last he ended an exemplary life by a holy death, in the 73d year of his age. It is supposed that Lazarus was beheaded, and thus died a martyr, and that a Roman officer, sent to Marseilles, tortured the holy bishop, in consequence of his constancy in the Christian faith, and then most cruelly beheaded him. The dark dungeon is still shown in which the holy man was a long time confined by the tyrant. His holy head is kept at Marseilles; the rest of his body is at Autun.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. Martha and Magdalen testify that their brother Lazarus was beloved by Jesus. "Behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." Christ calls him friend. "Lazarus, our friend,</p>	<p>sleepeth." The belief of many commentators of Holy Writ, as I have before mentioned, is that he deserved this by his undefiled chastity. "He that loveth cleanness</p>
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of heart shall have the king for his friend : " thus speaks the Holy Ghost. (Prov. xxii.) Whose love or friendship do you win by sinning against chastity or by carelessness in guarding it ? Truly, only that of the devil and his legions ; for, nothing is more pleasing to him than the vice of unchastity. " No food," writes St. Ambrose, " is more agreeable to Satan, than the soul and body of the unchaste." Eusebius of Émesa, writing on the text of the Gospel, in which it is recorded that the Prodigal satisfied his hunger with the husks given to the swine, says : " These swine are the evil spirits ; because they enjoy the mire of vice. And those feed these swine who obey their will and fulfil their desires. Unchaste pleasures are the husks with which the evil spirits are fed. Sinners wish to eat their fill of them, but they cannot ; for, the more they sin, the more they desire to sin." Whose friendship are you seeking, that of the devil, or that of the Lord ? Which do you prefer ?

II. St. Lazarus consecrated his life, which, by special favor, he had received a second time from Christ, entirely to the service of the Most High, and spent it in labor for His honor and the salvation of souls. God gave life to you by creating you ; He has not raised you from the dead, but He has miraculously protected you in many dangers of death. Although you deserved to go to eternal destruction, the infinitely merciful God spared you and did not take you away in your sins. Would it therefore not be unpardonable ingratitude if you do not consecrate your entire life to the service of the Most High ? would it not be an incomprehensible wickedness in you, to make use of it to offend Him ? And what else have you done until now ? Examine your conscience, and then cast yourself full of shame

before the throne of the Almighty, and humbly beg Him to pardon your wickedness. Resolve to employ the rest of your life only in the service of Him who gave it and who has preserved it until now ; for, the preservation of your life may be considered a daily-renewed gift of it. " Every hour, every moment," says St. Augustine, " I enjoy the gifts of thy mercy. I should hourly perish if thou didst not preserve me. I should die daily if thou didst not guard my life. Thou unitest me every moment anew with thee." Make, therefore, the resolution of which I spoke above, and say with the Psalmist : " And to him my soul shall live : " it shall live for the Lord ; I will give my soul, my body, all I possess to the service of the Lord. (Psalm xxi.) The following is a prayer used by many in sickness and in health. " O Jesus, in thee I live : O Jesus, in thee I die." Those who can say the first part of it truthfully, " O Jesus, in thee I live," that is, according to thy holy will, to serve only thee, may also say with full confidence : " O Jesus, in thee I die," that is, I die in thy love, in thy grace, under thy protection. But whoever cannot say the first part truthfully, but may rather exclaim : " World, for thee I live ; flesh, for thee I live, Satan, in thee I live," must also add : " Satan, in thee I die," I am thine, living and dead. St. Bonaventure says justly : " Nothing dies in man but what has lived in him. If my hand or foot have not lived in me, they cannot die in me. Thus only those die in the Lord who have been true living members of Christ through faith and love ; and no one dies in the Lord, who has not lived in Him." Hence, if you desire to die in Christ, live in Christ, in the manner I have already explained to you : " And to Him my soul shall live ! "

EIGHTEENTH DAY OF DECEMBER.

ST. PHILOGONIUS, BISHOP OF ANTIOCH; AND ST. ADO, ARCHBISHOP OF VIENNE.

The celebrated and holy Philogonius lived in the reign of Constantine the Great. After having finished his studies, he practised law, but in such a manner that he might serve as a model to all in a similar calling. He never undertook any lawsuit before he had thoroughly examined the case, and, being entirely frank with those who desired his assistance, he never pleaded a cause which seemed unjust. Nothing could deter him from what he thought right, neither fear of those above him, nor promises nor presents. The poor he served gratis, and he defended, both by word and writing, the widow and the orphan against the power of the great, never refusing his counsel to those whose means allowed but a small recompense or none at all for his services. Love for his neighbor was to him a greater incentive to work than eagerness to gain temporal goods. How high these noble qualities raised him in the estimation of the people was especially manifest, when after the death of the bishop, they were choosing a worthy successor to their late shepherd. The entire people insisted on having him as bishop, who, until then, had with so much kindness and justice, assisted them in their temporal affairs. The voice of the people was regarded as the voice of God, and Philogonius was consecrated Bishop of Antioch.

He administered his sacred functions in the most zealous manner. St. John Chrysostom, who preached a magnificent sermon on St. Philogonius, says himself, that to speak worthily in his praise surpassed all eloquence. Licinius, at that period, persecuted the Christians, and Philogonius did his utmost to protect them. He animated them to constancy, and taught them not to allow either the loss of their temporal goods, nor other sufferings to separate them from Christ, or to leave the true Church, as they would deprive themselves of their eternal possessions, and would have nothing to expect but the pains of hell. By frequent representations of the unending joys of heaven and the torments of hell, he strengthened his flock so effectually in the true faith, that they were willing to suffer poverty and tortures, and even death, rather than leave it. When it happened that one would apparently forsake the true faith through fear of martyrdom, the holy man, though deeply grieved, spoke neither harshly nor unkindly to him, but, with a heartfelt compassion, represented the

greatness of his sin, exhorted him to do penance and atone for his error, and encouraged him to constancy. When he saw that his admonitions were heeded, he greatly rejoiced and always treated the penitent with kindness, without ever reproaching him for his fault, or even alluding to it.

When the persecution of Licinius had ceased, Arius began to disseminate his heresy. No shepherd could be more solicitous to protect his sheep from an attack of wolves than St. Philogonius was to keep the Heresiarch from his people and retain them in the faith of Christ. Arius confessed that Philogonius had been his strongest adversary and had opposed him most effectually. The holy bishop explained the wickedness of the new heresy, and refuted it as well in public sermons as in private discourses, by which he greatly benefited his flock. Besides this, he zealously endeavored to uproot all abuses that had crept in, and to plant in the hearts of all a hatred of sin and a love of virtue. Towards this end he directed all his exhortations, which had great influence over the people, as he supported his precepts by the example of his virtue. His conduct was so blameless, that even his enemies could find no fault in it. He was greatly devoted to prayer, and always sought refuge in it when he was in affliction. He allowed no comfort to his body, not even necessary rest. He guarded his sheep day and night, and the result was, that it was said of the Church at Antioch, that true virtue and piety reigned among all classes of people. St. Chrysostom compares it to a well cultivated and fruitful garden, cleansed from thorns and brambles; and says that it showed the indefatigable care of him who had governed it. The Almighty wished, at last, to give the promised reward to His true and faithful servant. A sickness, apparently of no consequence, prepared his way. The thought of the labors he had undergone in his functions during his life, for the honor of God and the salvation of souls, gave him inexpressible comfort in his last hour; and the hope of going to heaven gave him the most ardent desire to die and rest in God. • This wish the Almighty granted, to the great grief of the people of Antioch.



In this month, in the year 875, St. Ado, Archbishop of Vienne, in France, rested in the Lord. Descended from a noble family, he passed his youth in the monastery of Ferrières, where his pious parents had placed him that he might be thoroughly instructed and led in the path of virtue. Young as he was in years, he was so earnest, modest and retiring, that he resembled

an old religious more than a youth of the nobility. With years he increased in wisdom and piety in such a manner, that he was admired by every one. The sweetness and delight that he had tasted in the service of God, determined him to remain for the remainder of his life within the walls that had sheltered his youth. No flatteries of his relatives, no persuasions, could change his resolution. He took the habit and endeavored to live as a true religious in accordance with the rule. At the end of a few years, he was to all a shining example of spiritual perfection. The fame of his virtues, wisdom and erudition became known in other monasteries; and Marquard, Abbot of Prom, in the diocese of Treves, asked for him as master of the novices. This office St. Ado discharged with admirable care and industry, to the great joy of the pious Marquard. At the death of the latter, Ado went, with the permission of his superior, to Rome, where he remained nearly five years giving excellent proofs of his virtues and talents. Returning to France, he went to Lyons, where the bishop soon became acquainted with his knowledge and wisdom. Desiring to keep him, he asked the permission of the Saint's abbot, saying that he wished to make use of his piety and wisdom for the benefit of the Church. The abbot gave the desired permission, and the bishop charged St. Ado with the administration of the parish of St. Romanus, not far from Vienne. How zealous he was in the fulfilment of his duties is plainly to be perceived in the high esteem that he won from the entire clergy, who after the death of the Archbishop of Vienne, unanimously elected him as successor. The humble servant of the Lord, deeming himself unworthy of so high a dignity, would have fled, but he was intercepted; and, notwithstanding all his objections, Ado was compelled to accept the episcopal dignity.

So unexpected an elevation did not cause the Saint to change in the least his pious conduct, but gave it new and brighter lustre. The same spirit of humility, modesty, mortification and devotion, which formerly had made him an example to all, still kept their sway over him. He labored so earnestly and with such success to instruct the ignorant, to reform morals, to abolish abuses, and restore piety, that in one year his whole archbishopric was entirely renewed. The aim of most of his exhortations and sermons was to impress on his flock the hatred of sin, and the necessity of penance; for he considered nothing more dangerous than to remain long in sin, or to make even a habit of sinning, and hence, almost constantly to remain in iniquity. To arouse sinners to repentance, he erected, at the entrance of the cathedral, a little chapel in the form of the sepulchre of our holy

Redeemer, and built an altar in commemoration of the three great penitents, St. Magdalen, St. Paul and the good thief, Dismas. This admonition effected much good and converted many hardened sinners. The Almighty afterwards made this chapel famous by many miracles. With his zeal to convert sinners, St. Ado combined true compassion for the poor and fatherly love for them. His income was spent mostly for their comfort, and for the building of several houses for the maintenance of the needy. His servants were ordered to admit the poor even when he was at table; for he used to say: "It is one of the first duties of a bishop to give admittance to his sheep at all times; that they may find comfort and help in their cares." Towards himself he was extremely severe, never permitting himself the slightest relaxation, scarcely even the necessary rest at night, as he occupied the greater portion of it in prayer and study. Notwithstanding his many and important affairs, he was always the first in the Cathedral choir, because it was his belief that prayer and the praise to the Most High, should always be preferred to all other business. In this manner, St. Ado had reached the age of 75 years, during sixteen of which he had been bishop, when it pleased the Almighty to call this faithful and unwearied servant to receive his eternal reward, by a happy death, on the 16th of December, 875.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. You observed how St. Philogonius acted towards those who, during their martyrdom or for fear of it, departed from the true faith. Endeavor to imitate him. There are persons who, while they were young, or later in life, committed great iniquities, but who afterwards did penance, and now lead an edifying life; while others, to the scandal of their neighbors, still live in sin. If you can do anything to convert the latter, leave it not undone. "Reprove," says St. Paul to his disciple Timothy; "entreat, rebuke;" but he adds, "in all patience." (Tim. vi.) or, as he says elsewhere, "in the spirit of meekness." (Gal. vi.) Take care that you do not despise the penitent for what is past; never reproach

them with their former evil deeds; do not even mention them; otherwise, you sin against charity. Rather pity them in your heart, and rejoice in their penance, as the Angels in heaven rejoiced at it. If you had been in their circumstances, or been tempted as they were, who knows that you would not have fallen much deeper than they did? You have God alone to thank for your escape. And who knows whether you will not to-day or to-morrow commit greater iniquities than they did? And if it should happen, tell me, would you like that every one should therefore despise you and reproach you with your crimes? Surely not; hence, do not so to others. The Almighty does not despise a sinner

who repents; how then do you dare do so? In the whole Gospel you cannot find that Christ reproached the repentant Magdalen, or Peter, with the sins they had formerly committed; what then gives you the right to reproach others? God promises by His prophet, that if the wicked do penance, He will forgive his iniquities. (Ezekiel, xviii.) Why then will you remember them and frequently refer to them? Take to heart the beautiful admonition of the Wise Man: "Despise not a man that turneth away from sin, nor reproach him therewith. Remember that we are all worthy of reproof." (Eccles. viii.)

II. St. Ado deemed nothing more dangerous than to remain long in sin, or to live almost continually in it. The Saint judged rightly; for, such a man has every reason to fear that he will die in sin, and hence go to eternal destruction. We generally die as we have lived; if we live in continual sin, it can hardly be expected that we shall not die in it. It would be a miracle of divine mercy not to die in sin after having continually lived in it. Whoever makes a habit of doing evil, and almost continually lives in it, generally dies without penance; because either he has no time for penance, being suddenly called away from the world, or he does not recognize, at the approach of death, the danger he is in, or because the disturbance of his mind and the violence of his pain allow him not to think of penance. But even should it happen that he does penance before his end, it is much to be feared that this penance is not satisfactory for want of true

sorrow, of earnest resolution, or of a sincere confession. In these cases it is very plain that a man is in danger of going to eternal destruction. Besides this, Holy Writ assures us, that a man without fear cannot be justified (Eccles. i); meaning, that because he does not do true penance, he cannot obtain pardon for his sins. A man who makes a habit of sin and almost continually lives in it, shows that he is without fear, that he fears neither God, nor His disfavor, His menaces, nor the punishment that awaits the impenitent sinner. How can true penance be expected from such a person? How can we imagine that he will obtain the pardon of his sins? If he had the least fear, he would most assuredly not offend the Lord so recklessly; he would appease Him without delay by true penance, and thus save himself from the danger of eternal damnation. Heed this lesson. Avoid all sin; but if you have sinned, remain not in so dangerous a condition; do penance, and make not a habit of doing wrong. Should you, however, already have done so, tear yourself away from the brink of the precipice on which you are standing. Be sure that evil habits must be uprooted, if you wish to go to heaven. Be sure also that they can be uprooted. The manner in which this can be done I have elsewhere pointed out to you. If you live almost continually in sin and do not overcome the evil habit, the words, with which Christ menaced the Pharisees, will become true of you: "You shall seek me, and shall not find me; and you shall die in your sins." (John viii).

NINETEENTH DAY OF DECEMBER.

ST. MEGENGAUDIUS, CONFESSOR; STS. TIMOTHY AND MAURA,
MARTYRS.

St. Megengaudius, or Megangosus, a count of Guelderland, led, from his early youth, a very pious life. He was looked upon as a mirror of devotion and virtue at an age when men generally think more of the world than of God. On arriving at manhood, he married, according to the will of his parents, Gerberga, daughter of Godfrey, Duke of Franconia, who bore him one son and four daughters, two of whom were married to princes, while the other two, Bertrada and Adelaide, left the world and went to Cologne to consecrate their lives to the service of God in a convent. Godfrey, his son, ended his life early; for as a violent war broke out between the Roman Emperor Otho II. and the Bohemians, Megengaudius, to show his fidelity to the emperor as his liege, sent Godfrey with a considerable troop of men to assist him. Godfrey fought valiantly with his men, but was slain in battle. The grief of the count, when news reached him of the death of his only son, can easily be conceived; yet not an impatient word escaped his lips. He submitted to the just though incomprehensible decree of the Almighty, and recognizing more and more the vanity of all earthly things, he served the Lord with still greater zeal than before. He determined, with the permission of his pious spouse, to devote all the estates that would have become the property of his son, to the erection of a church and convent, that the praise of the Lord might constantly rise upward from them. He selected a place at Villich, near Bonn, where he built a church and a large convent, endowing both richly. As soon as the building was completed, the pious Gerberga gathered around her many virgins of the nobility, who desired to serve the Lord in perpetual chastity. With the permission of the bishop, she called her daughter Adelaide from the convent at Cologne, and made her superior of the community, of which she herself, with her husband's leave, became a member. Megengaudius also desired to pass the remainder of his days in the peaceful retirement of a monastery; but God inspired him to remain in the world, as, in governing his people, he would find ample opportunity to labor for the honor of God and the salvation of souls. The holy count obeyed the heavenly will, carefully divided his time between his business and his spiritual duties, and strictly kept the regulations he had made. Several hours were appointed for prayer and devout reading at home,

others to visiting the Church, and others to the affairs of the State. To the poor he was extremely charitable; he fed daily a great number of them at court, while to others he sent alms. He was especially kind to widows and orphans, and watched over them so carefully, that none of his officers ever dared to oppress or harm them. He gave admittance to every one of his subjects, listened patiently to their grievances and complaints, and endeavored to give them aid and comfort. In this manner the holy count continued to live until his end. Three years before his death, his pious spouse Gerberga died in her convent, and although her loss was very painful to him, he bowed submissively to the will of God, without grieving immoderately. His whole life had been a preparation for death, but after Gerberga had closed her eyes, he kept himself still more in readiness for the hour in which his Master would call him. Hence he evinced not the slightest disturbance, when it was announced to him that his end was approaching. He was accustomed frequently to receive the holy Sacraments, and desired to be strengthened with them as soon as he knew that his life was in danger. Having received them with great devotion, he employed the time still left to him in praying, and at last died a holy death, in 1001. He appeared after his death to his daughter Adelaide and to some other religious, surrounded by inexpressible light and glory. The many miracles which took place by his intercession, and the great virtues by which he had shone during his life, were the cause of his being placed among the number of the Saints.



In the fourth century, on this day, St. Timothy and St. Maura ended their lives by a glorious martyrdom. Timothy was the son of Christian parents and was born in the hamlet of Perape, in the province of Thebes, in Egypt. He had himself instructed carefully in the Christian faith from his early youth, in order to meet any persecution well prepared. His conduct was such that it edified every one. He wished for an opportunity to give his life for his faith, and it was at last afforded him. Arianus, the heathen governor of the province, came to Perape with orders to exterminate Christianity. Hence, calling all the Christians into his presence, he announced to them the imperial command, that they must leave the new faith and worship the gods. Timothy was among the first called to the governor and commanded to sacrifice to the idols. As he said in plain words that he would rather suffer the most painful martyrdom than become guilty of such wickedness, the governor

demanded that he should at least deliver up the Christian books of which he had the charge. Timothy knew that the heathen would immediately burn these books; therefore he refused them, saying: "These Christian books are my beloved children. A father who would give his children into the hands of an assassin would be a monster." Enraged at these words, the tyrant ordered red-hot irons to be put into Timothy's ears, which caused him indescribable pain. While suffering this cruel martyrdom, the holy man praised the Almighty with a loud voice, which roused the wrath of the governor to such a degree, that he ordered the Christian hero to be hung by the feet to a pillar, a large stone to be bound to his neck, and a sharp bridle put in his mouth, so that he might no longer praise the God of the Christians.

While he was thus suffering, it was announced to the tyrant that Timothy had been but three weeks married, and that perhaps he might be influenced more by means of his young spouse than by tortures. Arianus had her brought before him, and commanded her to use her utmost endeavors to persuade her husband to sacrifice, at least apparently, to the gods, as otherwise he would have to suffer the most terrible torments. Maura, who loved her husband dearly, promised to do all in her power to save his life. Although she was herself a Christian, she had not, at that time, sufficient fortitude to suffer for the sake of her faith. When brought to Timothy and seeing his dreadful suffering, she fainted away. Timothy was then loosened from the pillar and the bridle was taken from his mouth, that he might be able to converse with his spouse. Maura, forgetting her faith, endeavored to persuade him with caresses and tears to submit to the imperial command. Timothy, indignant at her, said: "How is this, Maura? Are you a Christian or a heathen? Is that the language of one educated in the Christian faith? Instead of persuading me to suffer fearlessly, you endeavor to alienate me from Christ? Shall I then, to enjoy a short happiness on earth, forfeit the eternal joys of heaven? or, to escape a short martyrdom, cast myself into the never-ending pains of hell?" This and more St. Timothy said to her, and God gave such power to his words, that Maura, deeply moved, recognized her fault and repented of it with her whole heart. Throwing herself at Timothy's feet, she asked his pardon, and exhorted him to remain constant in suffering. "But what shall I do for the fault I have committed?" asked she. "Go to the governor, by whose persuasion you committed it," said Timothy, "and tell him that instead of inducing your husband to forsake his faith, you yourself are ready to suffer martyrdom with him." Maura, terrified at this proposal, said, "Oh! I am still so young; hardly

17 years old, of delicate health and timid by nature. I dare not present myself before the tyrant, much less to endure a cruel martyrdom." St. Timothy, however, encouraged her to put her trust in God, and represented to her the example of many others, who, though younger than she, had endured the most cruel torments cheerfully. Kneeling down with her, he prayed for grace and strength. During his prayer, every trace of fear and despondency vanished from Maura's heart, and she even felt so strong a desire to suffer for Christ's sake, that going to the tyrant, she informed him that not only she had not persuaded her husband to forsake the Christian faith, but that she was ready to share his sufferings. Arianus, surprised at this unexpected change, ordered her immediately to be tortured. He had her hair torn from her head, her fingers cut off, and her whole body burnt with sulphur and tar, and at last ordered that she, as well as Timothy, should be crucified, that their torments might be increased by seeing each other suffer. This, however, proved a great consolation to both of them; for they animated each other to persevere, praised the Almighty with a loud voice, and admonished the people, who witnessed their suffering, to abandon the false gods, and become converted to Christianity; until their souls went to heaven to receive the crown of martyrdom.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The death of an only son in whom centered the hopes of perpetuating a noble name must in truth have been deeply painful to the heart of Megengaudius. Not less must it have grieved him to see his beloved spouse, his equal in virtue, depart before him. But in both of these events he submitted to the inscrutable judgment of the Almighty, and neither uttering a complaint against God or man, nor giving way to immoderate sadness, he bent his will to that of the Most High. How do you behave in similar circumstances? Are you one of those who grieve inordinately, who murmur against Providence, and, so to say, demand an account of God, or desire to know the reason why He has permitted affliction to fall upon you? Oh! how wrongly you act.

First, what avails your inordinate grief; will it raise the dead again to life? Secondly, what right have you to murmur against God? Is He not the Master over the life and death of all human beings? Can He not call each one of us at any time He may see fit? Or shall He first ask you whether He may let this one or that one die? To demand an account of God, is a presumption that deserves greater punishment than you imagine. Listen to the words of St Augustine, though they treat of a different subject. He speaks of the prohibition concerning the tree of knowledge in Paradise, saying: "If the tree is good, why then shall I not touch it?" Adam might have said; if it is bad, why does it stand in Paradise? God could have answered him: It stands in

Paradise because it is good ; but I forbid you to touch it ; for, it is my desire that you should be an obedient and not a contradicting servant. And why ? Because you are the servant and I am the Lord, and in these words I give you a hundred reasons in one. God is our Lord and has not told us His will that we should question it, but that we should obey it. We are only servants of the Lord : hence it is right that we go whither the Lord wills." Consider these words well, and when circumstances require it, make use of this saying of St. Jerome : " God is good and all that He does must be good. If God takes my husband away, I weep because of the bereavement ; but as it has so pleased the Lord, I will suffer with an obedient heart. My only son has been taken from me ; but as it was done by Him who gave him to me, I will bear it."

II Maura advised her husband to commit a great sin when she counselled him to submit to the Governor's command and at least apparently to sacrifice to the gods. It is not seldom the case that wives desire their husbands to do wrong. Eve did this in Paradise when she persuaded Adam to eat of the forbidden fruit. Jezabel advised her husband, king Achab, to take possession of the vineyard of Naboth. But St. Timothy followed not the advice of his spouse, but brought her to the knowledge and repentance of her fault, and persuaded her also to atone for it by shedding her blood for Christ's sake. How happy would Adam have been had

he not followed Eve's advice ! As he, however, did so, God announced to him his punishment, and banished him and Eve from Paradise, as we read in Genesis. The Almighty foretold also, by the prophet Elias, a terrible punishment to queen Jezabel and king Achab, who followed her counsel, as we read in the third book of Kings. How much more sensibly did Job act, when his wife advised him to offend the Lord and then die. " Thou hast spoken like one of the foolish women, said he. If we have received good things at the hand of God, why should we not receive evil ? " (Job ii.) This example was followed by St. Timothy, who listened not to the bad counsel of his wife. All husbands should do as he did when they are tempted to sin by their wives. But what I have said of the husbands, has also reference to the wives : for, experience teaches that they also are frequently incited by their husbands to do wrong. Before the judgment-seat of the Almighty, the excuse, my husband advised me to do it ; or, my wife incited me to it, will be of no more avail than what Adam said : " The woman whom thou gavest me to be my companion, gave me of the tree, and I did eat." The sentence of God will be the same. " Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat, cursed is the earth in thy work." (Genesis iii.) Before God, he is as guilty who advises to sin, as he who follows the wicked counsel.

TWENTIETH DAY OF DECEMBER.

ST. DOMINIC OF SILOS, ABBOT AND CONFESSOR.

St. Dominic, the Benedictine Abbot, celebrated on account of the many miracles that he performed, was born at Canas, a village in Spain, of indigent but virtuous parents. In his youth, he guarded his father's sheep, and led a very innocent life, occupying much of his time in prayer and devout meditation. Thus the desire grew slowly on him to leave all temporal affairs and serve the Almighty in a desert. In consequence of this, he left his home, chose a convenient place, built a small hut and there passed some time in great peace and calmness of heart. God, however, inspired him with the thought that it would be much more beneficial for his soul, if others were to guide him in the path of virtue which he had resolved to pursue. Hence Dominic left his solitude, went to the monastery of St. Æmilian, where he was received into the Order of St. Benedict. In a few years, he made so much progress, both in virtue and learning, that he was ordained priest, and some time later was elected Abbot of the monastery. He administered his functions most perfectly, until the despotism of an avaricious king banished him from Navarre. The occasion of this was as follows: The treasures of this monastery, or rather of its church, had so dazzled the king's eyes, that he was continually occupied with the thought how to get them into his possession. At first, he demanded them with civility of Dominic as the Superior. Seeing however, that he could not prevail on him, he began to threaten. Dominic remained unmoved, and declared publicly that he would rather give his life than permit anything consecrated to God to be so unjustly taken away. The king was so violently enraged at this, that he banished the Abbot and some other religious from the country, and took undisturbed possession of the monastery. Dominic went to the king of Aragon and Castile, Ferdinand I. who joyfully received him, having heard much of his virtues and holiness. He gave him the monastery of Silos, which, having formerly enjoyed a great reputation, then stood empty on account of the unfavorable times. The holy Abbot repaired the monastery and church as well as he could, and occupied it with his religious, in the name of the Lord. God sent him several persons, partly youths, partly men of riper years, who desired to lead a religious life. Dominic led them to perfection, not only by instructions, but much more by his example. For twenty-three years he governed this monastery as Abbot, and all who knew him,

honored and admired in him, a most perfect example of all virtues. The fame of his holiness spread over all Spain, and the Almighty increased it by several miracles. Not to mention the blind whom he restored to sight, the dumb to whom he gave speech, the deaf to whom he gave hearing, he had an especial gift to free captives. At that period, many Christians were held in captivity by the Moors, and their miserable condition was an object of great compassion to the holy Abbot, not so much for the hardships they endured, as for the danger in which they were to abandon their faith. Many prayers, holy Masses, and penances did he offer to the Lord on their behalf; and he was greatly rejoiced, whenever he was able to assist in their liberation. Some of these captives had known the holy Abbot before their captivity, and had seen or heard of his miracles; others became acquainted with him through what the former told them. All these captives had great confidence in his intercession with God, and invoked him, although he was still alive and far away, to redeem them from their captivity. Others represented to the Almighty the services of this His faithful servant, and prayed humbly to be released by his merits. After such prayers, though the captives were ever so closely watched, and far from him, they were freed by divine power, and without knowing how it came to pass, they found themselves before the gates of the monastery of Silos. Almost daily some of them were seen to joyfully cast themselves at the feet of the Saint, giving thanks to God and to him for their liberty, and hanging the chains, with which they had been bound, in the church, as an eternal remembrance of the miracle. The walls of the church were entirely covered, even in the lifetime of the Saint, with these tokens. After his death, this miracle continued, and many churches and chapels, erected in honor of the Saint, were adorned with the chains of captives who had invoked him. One of these is yet to be seen at this day, not far from Loranca de Tajuna. This account may seem incredible; but it is attested by numerous persons who were eye-witnesses of the miraculous occurrences. The Almighty desired to make His faithful servant glorious in a special and unusual manner. The hour of his death was revealed to him long before it came. The Saint prepared himself for this supreme moment with great fervor, exhorted those under him to constancy in virtue, foretold many future events, and calmly expired, in the year of our Lord 1073. In his last sickness, he held the crucifix, which during life he had always desired to have before him, almost constantly in his hands, and while devoutly embracing it, he fell asleep in the Lord. It is noteworthy that the mother of another St. Dominic, who was to be the founder of the Dominican Order, went to the tomb of our Saint,

before the birth of her child, to implore his protection. The holy Abbot appeared to her, and assured her that her prayer would be granted. In gratitude for this favor, she called her son Dominic, a name which, in later years, gave such splendor to the whole church of Christ.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Dominic offered to the Almighty many prayers, masses and penances for the deliverance of captives, on account of the danger they were in of abandoning the Christian faith and thus losing their salvation. Many are prisoners in our days, most of whom, no doubt, deserve to be imprisoned on account of their crimes; but experience also shows that many are innocent. Their sufferings are very great; and wo to those by whose fault they have been made unhappy. The evil one tempts prisoners sometimes most violently in order to cause them to murmur against God, or to bring them to despair. If you can assist such poor people with alms, or in any other manner, do not neglect it. Think that it is a work of charity which Christ accepts as if it were done to Him. If you can do nothing else, pray for them that God may bestow upon them the grace to bear their imprisonment with Christian patience. "Remember those that are in bonds as if you were bound with them;" says St. Paul. (Heb. xiii.) He praises also the Christians for having followed his admonition: "For you had compassion on them that were in bonds." (Heb. x.)

II. St. Dominic, during his last sickness, held the crucifix almost constantly in his hands, and while embracing it most devoutly, he calmly expired. He knew that Christ alone can aid the dying. Have you, my reader, ever meditated upon the last moments of

life? "My kinsmen have forsaken me, and they that knew me have forgotten me," says Job. (Job xix.) The dearest friends leave him who is dying. But should they stand in crowds around the bed, they would be more a burden than a comfort to him. They cannot relieve his sufferings, nor for one moment keep death away. Not one of them goes with the departing soul to the judgment-seat of the Most High. No one can speak for him, no one can help him. Those for whose sake he perhaps frequently offended the Almighty, remain and say silently, what the Pharisees said to the traitor Judas: "What is that to us? look thou to it." (Matth. xxvii.) And yet there is no time when man needs more help, than in the time of sickness and of death. If you therefore desire to act sensibly, seek in time a friend who will not leave you, who can and will help you. This friend is Christ, who was crucified, your Saviour, your Redeemer. "Choose Him as a friend before all," admonishes St. Augustine, "who alone will remain faithful to you on the day of your death. He will not leave you when all others forsake you." Gain His friendship now and endeavor to retain it. For no one's sake ever offend Him, who alone can assist you in your last hour. Do not forsake Him now, by committing sin, by whom you will not be forsaken in death; otherwise what is written will become true of you: "You have left me

and I have left you." (Paralip. Chapt. xii.) Take now the cruci- fix in your hands and say trust- ingly with David: "Thou art my	God! depart not from me: for tri- bulation is very near; for there is none to help me but Thou!" (Psalm xxi.)
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TWENTY-FIRST DAY OF DECEMBER.

ST. THOMAS, APOSTLE.

St. Thomas was a fisherman, born in Galilee. The divine Saviour received him among His Apostles, to announce His Gospel to the world, and to convert mankind. From the time that he was chosen to so high an office, Thomas followed his beloved Master everywhere, and feared no danger. One day, when Jesus spoke of going to Judæa, to awaken Lazarus from the dead, some of His disciples opposed Him, saying: "Rabbi, the Jews but now sought to stone Thee, and goest Thou thither again?" They probably feared that they would have to suffer with Him. Thomas, however, more courageous than the others, said: "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." By these words the Apostle manifested that no fear of death would separate him from Christ; and that, rather than leave Him, he would die with Him. It is true that later, with other disciples, he left Him on the Mount of Olives, when He was taken prisoner by the Jews; but he returned soon, and joined the rest of the Apostles. On the day of His resurrection, Christ appeared to them. Thomas, however, was not with them. When they told him afterwards, that they had seen the Lord, he doubted, and said: "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." By this, Thomas meant that he did not believe the resurrection of the Lord, although he had several times heard from the lips of Jesus, not only a prophecy of His sufferings and death, but also of His resurrection; and although the Apostles and several pious women had repeatedly assured him that they had seen the risen Lord. The Holy Fathers say that Christ permitted this unbelief in Thomas, not only that from it we might learn our own weakness, but also that all who believe in Him might be so much better instructed in the mystery of His resurrection, and strengthened in their belief in it. Hence, St. Gregory writes: "The unbelief of Thomas has been more useful to our belief than the belief of

the other disciples of the Lord, who, without hesitation, received the news of His resurrection," because the unbelief of Thomas gave occasion for new proofs of the resurrection of Christ. The eighth day after that event, Christ came into the hall where Thomas was with the other Apostles, and greeted them with the words: "Peace be unto you." Then, turning to Thomas, He said: "Put in thy finger hither, and see my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and put it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing." What Thomas must have felt at these words, and at seeing his risen Saviour, each one may picture to himself. He saw himself suddenly convinced, not only of the resurrection, but also of the omniscience of his dear Master. With shame and fear at the remembrance of his fault, but also with love and confidence at the thought of the meekness of the Saviour, he touched, with deep veneration, the holy wounds, and exclaimed: "My Lord and my God!" In these few words he repented of his unbelief, and at the same time made a confession of his faith, in presence of those whom he had scandalized by his obstinacy. He remained until his end, constant in his belief; and, after the descent of the Holy Ghost, announced, not only the glorious resurrection of the Lord, but also the other mysteries and articles of the faith. St. Thomas passed some time in Judæa, preaching the Gospel, and then went into distant countries, inhabited by savage races, as Parthia, Media, Persia, Hyrcania, and came, at last, to India. In all he preached the Gospel of the Lord, notwithstanding the manifold difficulties which the Evil One placed in his way, through the enemies of the faith, and the numerous persecutions which he everywhere endured. How many thousand souls this holy Apostle converted to Christ is known only to Him from whom nothing is hid. The many miracles which he almost daily performed, persuaded the people that the faith which he preached was truly divine: hence his success with the most embittered pagans. He made the largest number of converts in India. This immense territory he traversed in every direction, and established Christianity in it so firmly, that traces of it were found there in the sixteenth century, fifteen hundred years after his death. Even in China, indubitable signs of it were discovered. He erected many churches, and placed Christian teachers in them, that the faith he had personally preached during his life might be preserved after his death. At the building of the church at Meliapor, one of the chief cities of India, a wonderful event took place. The sea had cast ashore a very large tree, which the king desired to make use of for the palace he was just erecting. But neither men nor many elephants could move the tree. The holy Apostle, full of trust in the Al-

mighty, offered to draw the immense burden all alone, if the king would make him a present of it for the Christian church he was about to build. The king consented, and St. Thomas, loosening his girdle, tied the end of it to one branch of the tree, made the sign of the Cross, and drew the tree away from the place where it was lying. All present were greatly astonished at this miracle, and many were converted, and assisted the Apostle in building the church. In this church the Saint erected a cross of stone, which, it is said, is still to be seen at this day. Upon this cross he engraved the following words: "When the sea will have reached this spot, men will come from Europe to propagate the faith which I began to preach." The sea was, at that time, far off, but at the time when St. Francis Xavier landed there, it had reached the cross, and the prophecy was fulfilled. The idolatrous priests who could not contradict the faith which St. Thomas preached, and which he verified by so many miracles, were enraged at his success, as they lost considerably in temporal goods by the conversions that took place. They therefore endeavored to arouse the king's wrath against him, or to make away with him in some other manner. Some write that they persuaded the king to pronounce his death-sentence, and that he was shot dead with arrows. Others relate that the Brahmins themselves took the life of the holy Apostle. They had ascertained that the Saint went every day, towards evening, to a cross which he himself had erected, and that he remained there a long time in prayer. This gave them a favorable opportunity to vent their wrath upon him. They came together silently to the place where, on bended knees, the Saint was saying his prayers. One of them thrust a lance into him so violently that he sank upon the ground; after which, the others continued to beat him and to trample on him until all signs of life ceased. When St. Francis Xavier came to India, the signs of blood were still to be seen on the cross where this murderous deed was committed; and more than once drops of blood appeared on this cross during the celebration of Mass, when crowds of people were present. St. Xavier, shortly after his arrival in India, went to the tomb of St. Thomas, and passed many days and nights there in prayer. He begged God fervently to bestow upon him the Spirit and zeal of this holy Apostle, that he might be able to restore the Christian faith which St. Thomas had preached there, but which had gradually been entirely exterminated. Before undertaking any important work, he went, if possible, to the tomb of St. Thomas; and when this was impossible, he invoked the holy Apostle's intercession, and endeavored to follow his example in all things.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Thomas, for three years, accompanied Christ our Lord; was present at His divine instructions; saw the many miracles He wrought; and yet became incredulous and remained so for eight days, and might have remained still longer, had not Christ mercifully restored his faith. Go, O man, and build upon your own strength, or if you have lived piously for some time, imagine you are secure against falling! Oh! how foolish, how presumptuous you are! That which happened to an apostle may surely happen to you. The sad fall of our holy Apostle, ought not, however, to make you despondent or fearful; it ought only to incite you not to trust too much in your own strength, but to walk continually in the fear of the Lord, and to pray to Him daily, that He may give you the grace not to offend Him, but to remain constant in His service. If you remain continually in the fear of the Lord, you will walk carefully and not fall into any great sin. For, it is written: "The fear of the Lord is unto life; and he shall abide in fulness without being visited with evil," (without falling into sin.) (Proverbs, xix.) Tertullian writes: "Fear is the foundation of our salvation. Whoever fears is careful. Through fear we shall become careful, and through carefulness we shall be saved. Whoever is careful is sure." If we cease to fear God, then we are near falling, even if we have reached the highest pinnacle of perfection. This the Holy Ghost indicates in the following words: "Unless thou hold thyself diligently in the fear of the Lord, thy house shall quickly be overthrown." (Eccles. xxvii.)

II. Thomas is called unbelieving

by Christ, although he disbelieved only one article, the resurrection. Hence, it is clear that he who doubts, or rejects only one article of faith, cannot be counted among true Catholics, although he believes all the others. A Catholic must believe every truth revealed by the Almighty, be it great or small, as God cannot fail either in small things or great. The offence which we do to God by denying even the smallest article of faith, is as great as if we denied an important one, or all of them together; for, it is just as if we said: God has been deceived, or He has deceived us in revealing this article. Whether this is said of great and important articles, or of one that is small, makes but little difference; or if we desire to make a difference, we must say that it is a greater offence to God to ascribe to Him a fault in a small matter than in a great; for, what can be more blasphemous than to maintain that the Almighty has been deceived in a trifling matter, or that He intends to deceive us? They should ponder on this, who sometimes entertain doubts about an article of faith, or even go so far as to say that in some matters, they agree with non-Catholics, and consider them right. These are no longer Catholics. Their faith is lost; and if they do not repent, as St. Thomas did, they will go to perdition, because they are incredulous. They are disobedient who obey nine of the Commandments but not the tenth. What is the fate of the incredulous? Christ Himself pointed it out when He said: "Who believes not in the Son, will not see life, but the wrath of God will remain with him." (John viii.)

TWENTY-SECOND DAY OF DECEMBER.

ST. FLAVIAN, MARTYR, AND ST. AGNELLUS, CONFESSOR.

St. Flavian, the father of two holy daughters, Bibiana and Demetria, and the husband of St. Dafrosa, was a descendant of a noble Roman family. His incomparable talents, great knowledge and holy life, made him so beloved and esteemed, not only by the people but also by Constantine the Great, that the latter raised him to the high office of Governor of Rome. The duties of this exalted dignity he fulfilled untiringly, but, at the same time, neglected nothing that his faith demanded of him; on the contrary, his principal thought was to disseminate more and more the Christian religion among his subjects. Those who had already embraced Christianity he endeavored to assist whenever an opportunity presented itself. After the death of Constantine the Great, his son Constantius, persuaded by his wicked empress, favored the Arian heresy, and persecuted the Catholics almost as much as had formerly been done by the heathen emperors. Flavian endeavored to strengthen the Catholics in their faith, and to defend the divinity of Jesus Christ against the Arian blasphemies. This zeal made him hateful to the emperor; and as neither promises nor menaces had any power to change him, he was divested of the high office which he had filled for so many years to the satisfaction of all Rome. Flavian was not cast down, but rather rejoiced because, for the sake of the true faith, he suffered so great a loss and no less ignominy. Julian, the apostate, who succeeded Constantius, persecuted the Christians most cruelly, as he was resolved to exterminate Christianity entirely. Flavian took this opportunity again to manifest his fearless zeal for the defence of the true faith. He encouraged the Christians to constancy, visited them in their imprisonment, comforted them, sent them nourishment, and admonished them rather to suffer everything than forsake their faith. The officers whom Julian had appointed to apprehend and torture the Christians, took no notice of this for some time, as Flavian was still greatly esteemed on account of his high rank and the dignity of the office with which he had been invested; but at last they informed the tyrant of it. The latter commanded his new governor, Apronian, to apprehend Flavian immediately, and either force him to abandon his faith, or to take his life by the most cruel tortures. Apronian obeyed the order: Flavian

was seized and brought before him. The governor endeavored to persuade him to forsake his faith, but Flavian said fearlessly : "I am a Christian, and will remain a Christian, and, further, I consider it the greatest honor to give not only all I possess, but also my life for the honor of Christ." The governor, greatly embittered, sentenced him to be dispossessed of his nobility, and placed in the rank of the most abject slaves, which, to a high-minded man, must have been more cruel than death. Hence, they tore the insignia of his nobility and of his former high office from his body, and, with a red-hot iron, burned a mark on his forehead. The pain was great, the ignominy and disgrace much greater; but Flavian bore it cheerfully. "I receive," said he, "this disgrace as the greatest honor that was ever bestowed upon me." Apronian would have tortured him still more, but as he knew that Flavian was highly esteemed on account of the faithfulness with which he had labored for the public weal, he desisted, fearing a revolt. He deprived him, therefore, of all his possessions, and sent him into banishment, giving orders to those who were to transport him to torment him on the road in every possible manner, in order that misery and grief might soon kill him. Flavian received the sentence of his banishment with the same joy that he had manifested at the preceding ignominy. The hardest thing for him to bear was to leave his spouse and his two daughters, as he foresaw that they would not be treated better than he had been. But this, also, he bore heroically, and placing them under the protection of the Most High, he went into his banishment, guarded by a troop of soldiers, who delighted in obeying the orders of Apronian, and maltreating him most cruelly. Not much better was the treatment which he received at the place to which he was exiled, where he soon ended his life. His only comfort was prayer, which so greatly supported him that, notwithstanding the hardships he endured, he was never seen sad, but always cheerful. It was also in prayer that he closed his holy life; for, one day, when conversing with God, his head sank quietly upon his breast, and his heroic soul became free. He was, indeed, worthy to be placed among the greatest martyrs of the holy Church; as what he had suffered for his faith will appear to many much harder to endure than the bodily martyrdom of other Saints.



To the short sketch of St. Flavian's life we will add a few words about St. Agnellus, who was granted to noble parents at Naples, through the special intercession of the Blessed Virgin. When

Johanna, his mother, greatly distressed at her barrenness, was praying before an image of the Blessed Virgin, she distinctly heard these words proceed from the image: "Johanna, thy prayer is heard; thou shalt give birth to a son, who will be very dear to me." This promise was fulfilled, and Johanna gave to her son the name of Agnellus. Fifty days after his birth, the following miracle took place: The child was held up to an image of the Blessed Virgin, and looking at it, he said in the presence of a great many persons: "Ave Maria:" this is, "Hail Mary," as if to signify that as he had been born by the intercession of Mary, he would spend his life in her service. After having uttered these words, he spoke not again until the usual time for children to do so. When his reason began to dawn, it was seen how justly the name of Agnellus, which means a little lamb, had been given to him; for he was ever patient and gentle, obedient to his parents, and to those above him, polite and kind to every one; he never complained or excused himself, was free from deceit; far from all falsehood; always honest and true; in one word, he was an innocent lamb. While growing up, he made so much progress in learning and virtue, that his relatives built great hopes upon him for the honor of their ancient name. By the early death of his parents, he inherited a considerable estate, but did not give his heart to it, and endeavored to use it for the welfare of his neighbors. He built a large hospital not far from the church, in which he had been promised to his mother by the Blessed Virgin. When this was quite finished and fitted up, he himself frequently carried weak, infirm, needy, helpless and sick persons into it. To wait on these he employed servants and nurses, all of whom he paid liberally, in order that they might be more willing in the fulfilment of their duties. The same he did with the physicians and the druggists, of whom he chose the best. He himself was most willing to serve the sick, as well by day as by night. He handed them their food, gave them their medicines, bandaged their wounds, and, in one word, waited on them as a father on his sick children. Besides this, he animated them to be patient and to receive devoutly the holy Sacraments. The Almighty blessed the charity of this holy man by many miraculous cures on patients who had been pronounced incurable. Those who placed obstacles in the way of the Saint's good works, were visited with divine punishment.

The Saint had a pious old servant, named Anna, whose principal business was to procure and to take care of the fowls, that were needed for the sick. One day, when the fowls had strayed away, they were taken and consumed by relatives of the Saint, who derided him for the care he took of the sick. St. Agnellus knew this

by divine revelation, and sending the good servant, he requested his relatives to make restitution. The good woman received nothing but abuse and invectives. Not much better treated was the Saint himself, when, representing their fault to them, with great gentleness, he exhorted them to atone for it. As they denied the deed, and were thus adding the sin of lying to that of theft, he reminded them that nothing was hidden from God, and told them that God had sent him to exhort them, and to threaten them with the divine wrath in case they despised his words. This admonition enraged one of them to such a degree, that, calling the Saint a liar, he gave him a violent blow which broke one of his teeth. The mild and patient servant of God bore the pain and the injury with wonderful gentleness, saying that he forgave them with his whole heart, but that he feared the Almighty would not leave unpunished the wrong which they had done to Him in the person of His servant. Hardly had these words passed his lips, when the wicked man who had struck the Saint, found that his arm was withered, while at the same time he became entirely blind. The bodies of the others who participated in the theft were immediately marked in a wonderful way with feathers. If this seems incredible to you, know that the entire city of Naples saw this miracle and attested it, and that God justly punished by mockery the mockers of His Saints. So visible a miracle, wrought to punish them, opened their eyes; they confessed the theft and asked St. Agnellus' pardon. He advised them to go to confession and to repair the theft. When this had been done, he, at their request, prayed that God would take the marks of their opprobrium from them. God heard his prayer for all except him who had struck the blow; for although the use of his arm was restored to him, he remained blind as long as he lived. So miraculous an event caused St. Agnellus to be much more highly esteemed by the inhabitants of Naples than before; so that in all important affairs of the city, the people had recourse to his prayers, which they deemed very powerful with the Almighty. They were not mistaken; for, it is well known that St. Agnellus, with the sign of the Cross, drove away an enemy who marched against the city or was already encamped before the walls. It is also known that, after his death, he was seen in the air, with a crucifix in his hand, keeping the enemy from besieging the town. Many sick persons were cured by the prayers of the Saint, or by his making the sign of the holy Cross on them. When the servant of God perceived that he was disturbed in his prayers and devout exercises by the crowd of people who constantly sought his help, he, one night, left the town secretly, as the hospital he had built no longer needed his presence. Retir-

ing to a forest, he remained there for some time, occupied in prayer, devout reading, and other pious exercises; his nourishment being roots and herbs, until God made it known to him, that he should return to the city and take care of those whom heaven would send him. Agnellus obeyed the voice of the Lord and returned to the city, where he found a great many priests, who, on account of the persecution of the Vandals, had fled from Africa to Naples. No sooner had they become acquainted with St. Agnellus, so famous for his virtue and holiness, than they humbly requested him to become their Abbot. Agnellus, already assured of the divine Will, consented to their request and became their superior. He exercised this function with unwearied zeal until his death, which took place in his 61st year, in the year of our Lord 676. Besides the other excellent qualities of the holy man's mind and heart, the fact deserves especial admiration, that although he suffered much hardship from persecution and other wrongs done him while he was erecting the hospital, and on other occasions, he never manifested the slightest despondency or sadness, but was always generous, unwearied and cheerful. It was remarked, however, that this was the fruit of his prayers; for as soon as he had to suffer, from whatever cause it might be, he sought aid and strength from the Almighty in prayer.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. It could not have been otherwise than very painful to St. Flavian to leave his beloved spouse and children; yet he was firm in confessing the true faith and willingly accepted all that he had to suffer on account of it. He showed himself strong-hearted and submissive to divine Providence; he gave his beloved into the care of the Lord and confidently commended them to His protection. It is not seldom that persons are found to whom it comes very hard to die, and who revolt against the divine decree, because they have to leave a spouse or young children. But what can they do against the will of God? Can they forcibly oppose the Lord, the

Almighty? Would it not be much more sensible to submit, though with a grieved heart, to His will, to commend spouse and children to His protection and prepare themselves carefully for their end? God knows the circumstances in which they are; if, therefore, He sees fit to call you, He will take upon Himself the care of those you leave behind. Why then should you grieve so immoderately? Cannot the Most High take better care of your family than yourself? Christ, our Lord, when dying, gave His mother to His disciple, John, although He could have taken her with Him to the other world. It is not written that He therefore manifested great

sadness and care. By this He gave us all an example, to teach us how we should act when separated by death from parents, children or others dear to us. Hence, if you should be in similar circumstances, follow the advice which St. Antony, the Hermit, received from heaven: "Think of yourself, and leave to God the care of others."

II. St. Agnellus was neither faint-hearted nor sad while in trouble, or while suffering persecution; but was always strong, cheerful and hopeful. In like manner, St. Flavian was not seen cast down by the most dreadful persecutions and ignominies that he had to suffer; he too was always cheerful. This was the effect of prayer, to which both were devoted. The Apostle St. James says: "Is any of you sad? let him pray." (James, v.) Most people, when sad or suffering, leave off praying; they feel as if they could not pray; and yet they never needed it more than just at that time. The evil one disgusts them with prayer at such moments; for he knows the power and necessity of prayer in sadness; hence he endeavors to keep us from it as long as possible. He is used to fishing in troubled waters; and besides keeping those who are sad from doing good, he influences them to sin, especially to murmur against God, to complain of Him; nay, he even brings them sometimes to despair: "For sadness has killed many," says the Wise Man, "and there is no profit in it." (Eccl. xxx.) In truth, we have no profit in sadness unless it be that we are sad on account of our sins, as St. Chrysostom teaches. For by such sadness, the

loss that we have sustained by sin may be repaired. But even this sadness ought to be moderate, that it may not make us faint-hearted, or bring us to despair. Follow the advice of the Wise Man, who says: "Give not up thy heart to sadness, but drive it from thee." (Eccles. xxxviii.) If you perceive that on account of misfortune or persecution, or sickness, or poverty, or any other trial, your heart becomes sad, think of the example your dear suffering Saviour gave you, and follow it. On Mount Olivet, He was overtaken by such deep sadness that He Himself said: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death." (Mark, xiv.) But what did he do? The gospel tells us that He went to pray and continued in prayer, and returned a second and a third time to His prayer. And what happened at the third time? His heavenly Father sent Him an angel, who comforted and strengthened Him; and encouraged him so greatly for His approaching passion, that He went fearlessly to meet His enemies who came to take Him prisoner. This beautiful, animating example your Saviour gave you that you might learn what to do when you are sad, or when you feel that sadness approaches you. Immediately have recourse to prayer, and give not way to any disgust of prayer, but force yourself to it and continue not only longer than usual, but repeat it also with great confidence. God, although He sends you no visible angel to strengthen and comfort you, will fill you with the consolation you need. "Is any of you sad? let him pray." (James, v.)

TWENTY-THIRD DAY OF DECEMBER.

ST. SERVULUS, CONFESSOR; AND ST. VICTORIA, VIRGIN AND MARTYR.

At the time of St. Gregory the Great, there was at Rome a poor beggar, named Servulus, of whose virtue and holiness, this great Pope and Doctor of the church gives the following testimony. Servulus was a beggar, who was daily carried into the vestibule of St. Clement's Church to receive alms from those who passed by. From his earliest infancy he had been so crippled, that he could neither walk nor stand, nor sit upright, but remained continually lying, without being able to turn from one side to the other. He could not lift his hand to his mouth, and his mother and brother fed him like an infant. To this was added the poverty of his mother, who could maintain herself and her son only by alms. But notwithstanding this misery, there never escaped from the lips of this poor beggar a single word of complaint, either for his misery, or the violence, or long duration of his suffering. Much less was he heard to murmur against God or His holy will, but on the contrary, he edified all by his submission to divine Providence, encouraging himself with verses of Holy Writ and never ceasing to praise the Most High. His most agreeable occupation consisted in praying and singing psalms, or listening to pious reading. His patience was inexhaustible, even during his greatest agony, and no pain was so great as to cause him to cease giving thanks to the Lord. He had great compassion on other poor, and therefore caused his mother and brother to give to them what he did not need of the alms he had received. Although the house, in which he lived with his mother and brother, was small and poor, yet many poor religious who came to Rome found a welcome there, when they could not find other lodgings. Servulus profited by their presence by humbly begging them to read to him out of some devout book. He himself could not read, and yet he knew almost the entire Scriptures by heart; for, out of the alms he received, he had bought a copy of Holy Writ, as well as other devout books, from which sometimes one, sometimes another would read to him. When he had no one to do this act of kindness, he paid some poor person to read to him, either at his house or at the place where he used to receive alms. By this he gained great knowledge of the lives of the Saints, and preserved his heroic patience until his death. For many years the Almighty gave a great

example of virtue to the Christian world in His faithful servant, Servulus, until at length He called him to heaven to receive his eternal reward. When the holy man perceived that his end was near, although he had daily prepared himself for death, he redoubled his zeal in order to die well. Having done all that a pious Christian can do in such circumstances, he, one night, suddenly called the religious, who were just then lodging with him, and begged them to sing some psalms with him, as death was approaching. He began to sing although his voice was already half broken. Suddenly pausing, he exclaimed: "Hush, hush! Do you not hear the angels sing? Do you not hear how beautifully they exalt and praise God?" and, turning his eyes upward as though he saw the angels, he breathed his last; while, at the same moment, his holy body exhaled so sweet an odor that those around were filled with astonishment and joy. There was not one who did not believe that the holy soul of Servulus had gone immediately to heaven, accompanied by the angels, to sing with them the hymns of eternal bliss, since he had lived so holy and innocent a life, had borne his wearisome disease with such heroic patience and resignation to the divine will, and had been honored, in death, with angelic music.



To-day is also the commemoration of St. Victoria, who was born at Tivoli, in Italy, of noble and Christian parents, in the beginning of the third century. Her unusual beauty, cheerful disposition, amiability and other graceful gifts, made her beloved by all who knew her, while her virtues and piety made her agreeable to God and the Saints. Her parents promised her early to a young man named Eugenius, of one of the richest and most noble families in Rome; but as he was a heathen, Victoria refused to give him her hand. Her parents at last prevailed on her to pledge herself to him, by telling her that she could easily gain influence over Eugenius and draw him from paganism. At the same time, Anatolia, the most intimate friend of Victoria, was also demanded in marriage by a heathen youth, named Titus Aurelius. Anatolia, however, courageously refused him, although her parents insisted that she should accept him. Titus Aurelius left nothing untried to gain her consent, but all was useless; hence he requested Victoria, through Eugenius, who was a friend of his, to speak to Anatolia, and persuade her by arguments to accept his hand. Victoria promised to comply with his wish, and going to Anatolia, said all that could be said to move her. Among other things, she confessed to her that her own reason

for promising to marry the pagan Eugenius, was the hope of converting him to the true faith, and thus to open heaven for him; there would be equal hope for Titus Aurelius, if Anatolia would become his wife. "How great will be our happiness," said she, "if we convert two heathens and bring them into heaven!" After Victoria had spoken, Anatolia began to show her the deceit of the Evil One, who, under the false gleam of hope to convert a pagan spouse, placed her in great danger of being corrupted in her faith by him, or at least of being hindered in the free exercise of it. She also explained to her the priceless value of virginal chastity, and told her that in the same night in which she had made the vow of perpetual chastity, she had been graced with the vision of an angel who had called virginal chastity a priceless treasure, an incomparable jewel, and had exhorted her to guard it carefully; further, that she had chosen Christ as her bridegroom, and would rather give her life than become faithless to him. Victoria, therefore, should now consider whether a mortal heathen bridegroom was preferable to an immortal and heavenly one. By this and similar speeches, Victoria became so deeply moved, that embracing her friend and shedding tears, she said: "Dearest friend, I will join thee; Jesus Christ, thy bridegroom, shall also be mine. I thank thee, that thou hast disclosed this deceit of the devil to me, who, while giving me the hope of converting a heathen, almost deprived me of my virginal purity. I have decided now; I will live and die a virgin." This resolution of the two holy virgins was immediately imparted to Eugenius and Titus Aurelius, and how it was received may be easily imagined. Both left nothing undone that they thought would induce them to alter their resolution. When they found that all was unavailing, they requested the Emperor's permission, to take the two virgins to their country-seats out of the city, hoping to be able to prevail upon them there, and gain their consent. But neither did they succeed by this means. The two virgins were, at their respective places, urged as well by kindness as by menaces; but each remained firm in her determination to die a virgin. After having retained them for some time, and seeing that all their endeavors were useless, the young men from being their wooers became their accusers before the Emperor, by whose order they were executed in the same manner, though not on the same day, by being stabbed in the breast with lances, St. Anatolia, on the 9th of July, St. Victoria, on this day, in the year 253.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. You have read how severely St. Servulus suffered from the first year of his life until his end, and also in what manner he bore his sufferings. Are you not ashamed to lose your patience and complain in your suffering and sickness, which is not a shadow of what St. Servulus endured? You perhaps say or think, that there is no one on earth that suffers as you do; that you have to bear every cross. But you are mistaken. St. Servulus suffered much more; and many others have suffered much more: and there are at this moment a great many persons living, who bear infinitely more than you. But supposing that you have in reality more to suffer than any one else, does it give you any reason to complain or murmur against God? Do you think God unjust, or that He does you wrong by giving you so much to suffer? Have you not deserved even more? Perhaps you say: "Why do I suffer so much and others not?" St. Servulus spoke not thus. Do you require that the Almighty should give you His reason, for what He does? How dreadful a presumption! Suffer what God lays upon you and leave others alone. God is your Lord, and it does not become you to question why He does this or that. The thought that all He does is for your good, ought to satisfy you. Who can know whether, had St. Servulus possessed health and straight limbs, he would not have made use of them to his own damnation? And who knows what you would do, if you were free from sickness, troubles and crosses? "To many persons health is hurtful," says St. Augustine. Just so is continual prosperity hurtful to them, while adversity, sickness and crosses are useful to

their salvation. Think of this truth if you suffer innocently like St. Servulus. But if your conscience tells you, that you have sinned, then say not a word; suffer and be silent; for, you have deserved more than you have suffered. "No matter how much we may suffer," says St. Salvianus, "we always suffer less than we deserve. Why then do we complain that God is hard? We arouse the wrath of God by our sins, and so to say, force Him to punish us."

II. How ingenious is the desire to learn something good! As St. Servulus was not able to read and yet anxious to learn how to live piously, he made others read aloud to him from devout books. If no one was there to do him this kindness, he took from the alms which had been given him and paid some one to read to him. This pious practice was the source from which he drew the wonderful patience and strength of mind with which he bore his great pains, and which made him so great a Saint. I have, during the year, several times advised you, that besides going to Church on Sunday and holidays, you should employ some time in reading a devout book, as the profit you would derive from it is much greater than you imagine. I repeat my advice and assure you that as, in our time, the greatest harm is done to our holy religion and to Christian morals, by the reading of heretical and immoral books, so also hardly anything is more necessary for the preservation of the true religion and the fear of God, as well as for sincere repentance and conversion, than the reading of devout books, besides listening to the word of God in sermons. As you value your holy religion and your salvation, do

not neglect reading pious books or cause them to be read for you as did Servulus.

In order to contribute as much as I could to this important object, I have published myself, a series of instructive books, and wish them to be read in every family. These books are: Catholicity, Protestantism and Infidelity, or the book for the conversion of Americans; The Manual of the Catholic Doctrine; The Sacred Heart Mission Book; The Book on the Infallibility of the Pope; Easter in Heaven; The Lives of the Saints with Practical Considerations; Photographic Views; and three Catechisms of Christian Doctrine. Try to get all these books and see that they are read by your children, especially these Lives of the Saints, every evening, and I will remember you at Mass every day of my life and pray for you after my death.

In conclusion, a few words upon the life of St. Victoria. This holy virgin did not act wisely when she determined to marry a heathen, from eagerness to convert him. For as, according to St. Chrysostom, a pious man much sooner becomes wicked by associating with the god-

less, than a godless man becomes pious by associating with the good; so also experience teaches that the number of Catholics who have left their faith, or at least become negligent in their practice of it, in consequence of mixed marriages, is far greater than that of converts to the Church by the same means. Such marriages are seldom without danger. Victoria knew nothing of this danger, but believed and followed her parents' wishes; hence, she committed no sin. But no sooner had she been informed by her friend Anatolia, of the danger in which she had placed herself, and at the same time, learned how agreeable virginal chastity is to the Lord, than she changed her resolution and determined to live in purity. She acted rightly; for although, when we have made a resolution, we ought to keep it; still when we discover that our resolution is unwise, it behooves us, as reasonable beings, to change it. It is a sure sign of an obstinate and haughty mind not to change a resolution even when convinced that it is wrong. "A wise man alone changes his determination," writes St. Ambrose.

TWENTY-FOURTH DAY OF DECEMBER.

ST. NICHOLAS, SOLDIER; AND ST. GREGORY, MARTYR.

Although we do not know much of the holy soldier, Nicholas, the little that we have tells us of his virtues, and gives us more than one wholesome instruction. The Emperor, Nicephorus, went against the Bulgarians with an army of valiant soldiers. Among these was Nicholas, a Christian, still young in years, but of a fearless mind. One day when he was quartered in a small town he was tempted to sin by one who thought that Nicholas, like many of his class, would easily be overcome.

The wicked woman, however, was mistaken in Nicholas; and though the temptation was repeated a second and a third time, it was each time victoriously repelled.

This three-fold victory was the beginning of his holiness; he was even indebted to it for his life; for, in the following night, God revealed to him in sleep, the battle that was to take place next day. He saw how at first the Bulgarians, bravely attacked by the imperial soldiers, suffered a great defeat, but afterwards rallying, they advanced upon the imperial army with such force that they gained a complete victory. Among the slain and wounded who were lying thickly strewn around, he saw one place empty. Desiring to know why this was, his Guardian Angel, who was standing near him, said: "This place would have been occupied by thee, if thou hadst consented to the temptation." The events of the following day showed that this was no empty dream; for, all happened as Nicholas had seen in his sleep. The imperial army attacked the enemy with such bravery that they retreated and seemed to be defeated; but suddenly rallying, they fell with impetuosity upon the legions and slew the greater part of them. Nicholas was miraculously spared, while his companions to the right and left sank dead upon the ground. Seeing his dream come to pass, Nicholas learned how beneficial it is, not only for the soul, but also for the body, to abstain from offending the Most High. A still deeper impression was made on him by the thought of the danger into which man voluntary throws himself by committing a mortal sin; as he would most surely have died in the sin to which he had been tempted, and thus would have gone to eternal destruction, had he committed it. Giving most humble thanks to God, for having so graciously preserved him, he resolved to quit the army, that he might be more removed from danger. Going, therefore, to the nearest monastery, he most earnestly begged permission to enter, in order to work out his salvation. The superior granted his request, and Nicholas began his religious life with great zeal, in which he continued until his end. Satan, who had tempted him before, gave him many more trials, but the remembrance of the danger in which we place ourselves by sin, prevented him from giving way. He battled as manfully against Satan as he had before fought against the tools that Satan had employed to ruin him. To obtain Divine aid in so dangerous a fight, he used prayers, fasting and other penances. God gave him a rich measure of grace and Nicholas corresponded perfectly with it. He fought bravely until a happy death called him to receive the crown of eternal glory.



To-day is also the festival of the holy priest, Gregory of Spoleto, whose relics are preserved and duly venerated at Cologne, in the Cathedral. St. Gregory lived at Spoleto, at the time of the two emperors Dioclesian and Maximian. During the cruel persecution of the Christians, which took place under the reign of these emperors, he encouraged the Christians to remain constant, and converted many to the faith. He continued with undiminished zeal, until Dioclesian sent to Spoleto an officer named Flaccus, with orders to search for Christians and to make away with them. Gregory was one of the first who was accused as an enemy of the gods and a corrupter of the people. Flaccus asked him: "Is it true that you are an enemy of the gods and a despiser of the imperial commands?" "From my youth I have worshipped the true God," replied Gregory, "and nobody will be able to prevent me from doing so." "Who is your God?" asked Flaccus. Gregory answered: "My God is He who created heaven and earth, and will reward every one according to his works." "Do not use so many words," said Flaccus; "but go to the temple, sacrifice to the great Jupiter, and you will gain the favor of the emperor, and make yourself happy for the rest of your life; while by refusing it, you have nothing to expect but the most terrible tortures." The brave confessor of Christ replied: "Of what use would be the favor of a mortal monarch, if I lost the favor of the immortal God? and of what avail is the short happiness which you promise, if after it I shall be eternally unhappy? I desire not such favors nor such happiness." When Flaccus perceived that all his words had no effect, he ordered the torture to begin. Gregory was at first most terribly whipped, with knotted scourges, upon the back, then upon the stomach; after which he was laid, bound hands and feet, upon a red-hot gridiron. The holy priest called unto God for aid, and at the same moment a fearful earthquake took place which destroyed many houses, and killed and buried alive more than four hundred of the inhabitants. Flaccus, greatly frightened, fled, and another judge sent the holy priest into a dungeon. In the following night, an Angel, sent by the Almighty, visited the Saint, and, after healing all his wounds, encouraged him to bear fearlessly his further martyrdom. The tyrant continued the torture on the following day. He ordered the Saint's knees to be broken with iron clubs, and then his whole body to be burnt with torches. Seeing that all this cruelty was of no avail, he at last sentenced him to be beheaded. The Saint went joyfully to the place of execution, exhorted all those

who had come to witness his death, to become converted to the true faith, and in prayer received the death-stroke. The tyrant had commanded that his body should be given as a prey to wild beasts, which were accordingly let loose; but when they came to the martyr's holy body, not one of them would touch it. Lowering their heads they all crept back to their dens. At this miracle many cried aloud: "Truly, the God of the Christians is the only true God!" Abundantia, a pious matron, bought the holy body for thirty-five pieces of gold, anointed it with precious ointment, and buried it with great reverence. In the course of time it was taken to Milan, and thence to Cologne.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Nicholas would have gone to destruction, soul and body, had he become guilty of the sin to which he was tempted. How he would suffer now in hell, if, having consented to it, and died in it, he would reflect that, to gratify a moment's desire, he had cast himself into eternal ruin! Thus also would St. Gregory have been lost for ever, had he, in order to obtain the emperor's favor, or the promised temporal happiness, forsaken the true faith and died after so shameful an apostasy. How deep his despair would be, if he remembered, that to enjoy a short temporal happiness, he had cast himself into the most terrible and eternal pains! You have, perhaps, more than once, deserved to go to destruction, soul and body, during this year, because you have been guilty of sin, tempted either by Satan or man. How do you suppose that you would feel, if you were in hell, and thought of the causes that brought you to it? "I did but take a little honey," sighed the unhappy Jonathan, and behold, I must die." (I Kings xix.) Would you not say and sigh in like manner: "I burn in hell and must eternally burn, on account of my unchastity, or on account of a short imaginary happiness, or a not less

short profit, which I sought in sin." Take this to heart, and if you are in danger of sinning, say to yourself: "Shall I make myself unhappy for ever, in one moment?" What has not happened till now, may still happen: you may die in your first sin and go to hell. Tell me, to whom have you to give thanks, that until now you have not died in your sins, and have not gone to eternal destruction? Oh! whom but the infinitely merciful God, the same God whom you have so frequently offended? How inexpressibly great is His kindness! Can you have the heart to offend so merciful a God?

II. Nicholas left the army, that he might be farther removed from the danger of sin and of eternal ruin. The life of a soldier in itself gives no necessary occasion to sin; and a soldier can live piously and go to heaven, where there are many who lived in that station. If we look only at the soldiers who have given their lives for the true faith, and thus gone to heaven, we shall find a large number. It is not to be denied that there are, at this day, a great many pious soldiers, who, if they persevere, have reason to hope for eternal salvation. But nevertheless, St. Nicholas acted rightly, when,

considering his weakness and the many dangers to which his soul was exposed in the military state, he feared for his salvation, and hence left it. Whoever wishes truly and earnestly to save his soul, must avoid sin and the proximate occasion of committing it, or make of the proximate occasion a remote one; otherwise he lives in continual sin, and is every moment in danger of being lost. Satan seeks to hide the danger by saying to him that one may remain in the danger of sin, provided he does not fall; and that, even if he falls, confession can set all right again. How terrible a deceit is contained in this! For, only to remain in danger voluntarily is a sin. Further, to remain voluntarily in danger of sin, and yet not commit sin, is what a sinner can not expect; and what even a just man cannot hope for, were he as holy as David, as wise as Solomon, or as strong as Samson. "If you remain long at the fire," says St. Isidore, "you will melt, even if you were made of iron. And whoever is near the danger will not long remain free from sin." The divine saying, that he who loves danger, will perish in it, gives us an infallible assurance of this. In re-

gard to confession, I have already told you, on the second day of this month, that the confession of those who voluntarily remain in danger, is invalid and sacrilegious; because they have not the earnest resolution to shun not only the sin, but also its occasion. Hence their confession and communion serve only to increase their iniquities and their condemnation. I therefore entreat those who are voluntarily in danger, that they would not allow Satan to blind and deceive them with his cunning pretexts, but consider carefully the two points which I have just explained. For I sadly fear that most of those, who are in such danger, do not even think of it, but, deluded by the evil one, will go to hell, with all their confessions and communions. But who can pity them, when they rather believe the devil, than the priest, confessors, Holy Fathers, nay even the Lord Himself, and remain in proximate danger without fear? "Who will pity a charmer stung by a serpent, or any that come near wild beasts?" says the Wise Man. (Eccl. xii.) Why does he go near? Why does he remain with them? Who shall have compassion on him? Who shall pity him?

ADVICE FOR THE COMING HOLIDAYS.

More than once during the year I have advised you, sometimes to take an hour, in which, setting aside all other cares, you should earnestly consider the state of your soul, and ponder well whether you can hope for salvation from the life you lead. In the same hour you should also carefully think how you ought to live in future, in order to gain salvation. As I am decidedly of opinion that this is an excellent means to live piously and save one's soul, I must once more return to this subject. No time is better adapted for making use of this means than the approaching Christmas. The holidays will give you a good

opportunity to do so. It is your duty to keep them holy ; and how can you do this better than by employing them to this purpose ? I will more fully explain to you in what manner this should be done.

Place yourself in spirit before the lowly manger of the Divine Infant, and devoutly pass one hour in the following manner :

First, beg of the Almighty God to bestow on you the grace to recognize all the sins and faults of which you have become guilty. After this, think how you have acted towards God during the past year, and thus occupy the first half hour. During the second half hour, think how you will act in future towards your God. After this, examine your conscience, as follows :—

I. Whether you have every day thought of the end and aim of your life, and if you have endeavored to live accordingly ?

II. Whether you have served God zealously, or, on the contrary, have been indolent and negligent in His service ?

III. Whether you have given due thanks to the Almighty for all the favors bestowed upon you, and whether you have sighed and fervently wished to be united to Him ?

IV. Whether in your good works you have had a good intention ?

V. Whether you have, in everything, submitted to the divine will, or have sometimes murmured and complained against the decrees of God ?

VI. Whether you have regularly said your morning and evening prayers, assisted at Holy Mass, and at the sermons, or out of laziness have neglected to do so ?

VII. Whether you have behaved in church with due reverence ?

VIII. How often and with what preparation you have gone to Confession and Holy Communion ?

IX. Whether you have daily made the acts of Faith, Hope and Charity ?

X. Whether you have not sinned against Faith, by reading or keeping heretical books ; by voluntary doubts about the articles of faith ; by deriding the laws of the Church and its ceremonies ; by giving ear to words against the articles of faith, or the usages of the Church ?

XI. Whether you have not sinned against Hope, by presumption, or, on the contrary, by faint-heartedness or despair ?

XII. Whether you have not sinned against Charity, by contempt of God, or blasphemies against Him, dishonoring His holy Name, or the holy Sacraments, or by vows and resolutions made, but not kept ?

XIII. How you have kept the Sundays and Holidays; and how you have enjoined those in your charge to keep them?

XIV. Whether you have sometimes read a devout book; whether you have been ashamed of your religion, or of public devotions, or have manifested this exteriorly?

XV. Whether you have made little account of sin, and especially disregarded venial sins, and have committed them without any hesitation?

These and other similar points consider well, and earnestly endeavor to repent of the faults you have committed, and most humbly beg God to pardon you. After this examination and repentance, think of what you have to correct in your conduct, and make your resolutions accordingly. Then again, revolve one point after another in your mind, and make earnest resolutions to correct your faults. After having done this, pray humbly to God to give you grace faithfully to keep your resolutions. Invoking the Blessed Virgin and other holy Patrons for this purpose, will be of great assistance to you.

This is the way to spend the hour on the first holiday. On the second, again choose a suitable hour, and after having prayed fervently to the Almighty to enlighten you, think how your conduct has been towards your neighbor during the year. For example:—

I. Whether you have loved your neighbor for the sake of God, and as you have loved yourself? Whether your love was a truly Christian love, or only a natural or sensual love, such as is also found among the heathens?

II. Whether you have not nourished a dangerous, scandalous, or sinful love and affection for any one?

III. Whether you have assisted your neighbor according to your means, especially the poor?

IV. Whether you have borne enmity or hatred towards any one, and remained long in it? Whether you have pardoned your neighbor the wrong he had done you, and have outwardly manifested this to him by the usual marks of kindness?

V. Whether you have wronged your neighbor by lying, stealing, defrauding, or in any other manner; whether you made debts and neglected to pay them?

VI. Whether you have not lessened or delayed the payment of artisans, day-laborers, servants or others?

VII. Whether you have not committed sin by defaming the character of others, or by giving ear to slanders?

VIII. Whether you have not sinned against charity by blaming your neighbors' actions, or by putting evil constructions upon them?

IX. Whether you have scorned, derided, or rashly judged

your neighbor, suspected him of doing wrong, and revealed your suspicion to others whom it did not concern?

X. Whether you have not affronted and scolded your neighbor, or spoken unkind words? Whether you have wished him evil?

XI. Whether you have not envied your neighbor's good fortune, or rejoiced in his misfortune?

XII. Whether you have not given scandal to your neighbor by deeds, words, immodest dresses, impure speeches and songs, or in any other manner?

XIII. Whether you have not kept him from doing good, incited him to sin? Whether you have not become guilty in any other manner of the sins of others, assisted them in doing wrong, not prevented it, not punished it, kept silence, or perhaps even helped them to hide it, given them the opportunity, or defended them?

XIV. Parents should examine themselves, how they have conducted the education of their children; and children, whether they have shown due honor, love and obedience to their parents?

Lastly, masters and magistrates should think how they have treated their servants, and those in their charge. Servants and all those in inferior stations, should examine themselves as to their conduct towards those above them. On these and other points examine yourself carefully, repent with your whole heart, and humbly ask God to pardon your sins. After this, consider earnestly in which of the above points you should, in future, correct yourself. Make new resolutions; offer them to the Almighty, and pray for grace to keep them. In this manner the hour of the second holiday may be occupied.

On the third holiday, take another hour at the most convenient time. Pray fervently to the Lord to assist you with His grace, that you may recognize how you have acted towards yourself during the year. After this, begin to examine your conscience. Ask yourself, for example, as follows:—

I. Whether you have earnestly labored for the salvation of your soul; or, on the contrary, have thought but little of it, and therefore have been very little, or not at all, solicitous about it?

II. Whether you have not postponed your conversion from day to day?

III. Whether you have not sinned against purity in thought, word, or deed?

IV. Whether you have not voluntarily placed yourself in danger of sin, and remained in it, or are still at this moment in it?

V. Whether you have been intemperate in your eating and drinking?

VI. Whether you are not addicted to violence of temper, to vanity, to avarice, or idleness?

VII. Whether you have not a passion for gaming, or a similar vice, to the detriment of your family?

VIII. Whether you have employed the temporal goods God gave you to the end and aim for which you received them?

IX. Whether you have passed your time in idleness, or evil-doing?

X. Whether you have been careless in correcting your evil inclinations or habits, or in observing your resolutions?

XI. Whether you have not neglected many opportunities to do good?

XII. Whether you have been careless and negligent in the fulfilment of the duties of your station?

XIII. Whether your conscience is troubled with anything that would give you great fear if you were to die to-day?

XIV. Lastly, examine yourself how you have kept the commandments of God and of the Church. Whether you have not, under one pretext or another, endeavored to evade them, or even, after the example of some wicked persons, transgressed them without shame?

After this should follow, as on the preceding days, an act of earnest repentance, and humble prayer to be forgiven. During the second half of the hour, consider which of the above points you have specially to correct; make good resolutions, and pray to God for grace to keep them. Regarding the resolutions which you should make, I would counsel you to write them, if not all, at least the most important, to read them every month, and examine how you have kept them. The benefit you will derive from this is greater than you imagine.

You have here, my dear reader, a short instruction for employing usefully one hour on each of the three holidays, for the salvation of your soul before the manger of the Divine Infant.

The last days of the year we should employ, first, in giving due thanks to God for every blessing He has bestowed upon us during the year. Secondly, in most earnestly repenting of our sins, and praying for pardon; in doing good, and making the resolution to serve God, in the coming year, with all our strength, and to work with zeal for our salvation. To this end, put three questions to yourself: "How has the Lord acted towards me during the past year? How have I behaved towards my God? What shall my conduct be towards God in future? The answer which your conscience will give to the first question will

incite you to gratitude; the answer to the second will cause you to repent of your sins and beg pardon; while the answer to the third will awaken in you the earnest resolution to better your life.

I do not doubt that you will yourself recognize the usefulness of such devotional exercises, and if you value your salvation, you will determine to practise them yearly. You have, during the year, given too many hours to the enjoyment of your body, to the care of numberless temporal affairs, to say nothing of the time you misused in offending God and injuring your soul. Hence, employ now three short hours in the above manner for the salvation of your soul. Could I ask for anything more reasonable? "Having given whole months and years to our body, let us employ a few days for the benefit of our souls;" thus admonishes St. Peter Chrysologus, whose words I have already cited to you elsewhere.

TWENTY-FIFTH DAY OF DECEMBER.

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Five thousand one hundred and ninety nine years after the creation; 2957 years after the flood; 2015 years after the birth of Abraham; 1510 years after the departure of Moses and the children of Israel from Egypt; 1032 years after the anointing of King David; in the 65th week, according to the prophecy of Daniel; in the 194th Olympiad; 752 years after the building of Rome; in the 42d year of the reign of the Emperor Augustus, when peace prevailed over the whole earth, and in the 6th age of the world, "Jesus Christ, Eternal God, the Son of the Eternal Father," to bless the world by His coming, was conceived of the Holy Ghost, and nine months later, was born at Bethlehem, of the Virgin Mary. Hence, to-day is the human birth of our Lord and Saviour.

In these words the holy Church announces, in the Roman Martyrology, to-day's great and glorious festival, the birth of our Saviour. The entire account of this festival cannot be given better than it is related in the Gospel of St. Luke, wherein we read as follows: Octavius Augustus, the Roman Emperor, had given peace to the whole empire by conquering his enemies. Nowhere was war heard of, and peace reigned over all the world. The emperor, desiring to know the strength of his empire, and

the number of his subjects, profited by this calm, and gave command to his officers to register the names of all the inhabitants of his dominions. Cyrinus was charged with the census of Syria and Judea. In order that this registering might be correctly made, the command was issued that everyone should be enrolled in the city from which his family came. Mary, the Blessed Virgin, and St. Joseph resided at Nazareth, a small town in Galilee; but as both were descended from King David, who came from Bethlehem, a small hamlet or town in the tribe of Judah, five miles from Jerusalem, they went thither. There they found all the houses so filled with strangers, who had come for the same purpose, that although St. Joseph took all pains to find a lodging for his holy spouse, he could not succeed. As the night approached, nothing was left for them but to repair to a cave in a rock, outside of Bethlehem. Both submitted to divine Providence, humbly worshipping the judgment of heaven, as they recognized that the only begotten Son of God, who became flesh to teach us humility and poverty, had Himself chosen this lowly and miserable stable as His birthplace.

Mary, the Virgin Mother, knew the hour of His birth, and remained deeply absorbed in contemplation of the great mystery which was soon to be fulfilled. At midnight she brought forth, without pain and without detriment to her virginity, Him whom she had conceived of the Holy Ghost, Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the Heavenly Father, the Saviour of the world. Seeing the Divine Child, she was filled with heavenly joy, and, sinking on her knees, she worshipped Him with deep humility and reverence, while her heart burned with motherly love. To God alone is known the greatness of the devotion and love which the Virgin Mother felt at that most holy moment. She took the Child into her arms, kissed it, and pressed it to her happy heart, wrapped it in poor swaddling-clothes, and, as no better place could be found, laid it in a manger. At that time, an ox and an ass were in the stable, and with their breath warmed the Divine Child trembling with cold. Mary and Joseph, prostrating themselves before the new-born Saviour, worshipped Him most devoutly. The Angels united their adoration with that of Joseph and Mary. They had already adored Him at the first moment of His Incarnation; but St. Paul assures us that they were commanded by the Almighty to adore him again at the time of His birth. While Mary and Joseph were kneeling before the Child, their souls enraptured with love and awe, the Heavenly Father announced the long-desired birth of the Redeemer of mankind to the heathens and the Jews; to the former, by a star; to the latter, by an Angel. During that night

shepherds were watching their flocks in the field, when suddenly an angel, surrounded with wonderful brightness, appeared to them. The men, seized with fear at this apparition, knew not what to say or think. The Angel addressing them, said: "Fear not; for behold, I bring you good tidings of exceeding great joy, that shall be to all people. For this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign to you: you shall find the child wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and laid in a manger." Hardly had the Angel said this, when a multitude of heavenly Spirits appeared, praising God and saying: "Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace to men of good will." The pious shepherds heard with astonishment the singing of the Angels, and, after they had seen them return to heaven, they said to one another: "Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath showed to us." They went hastily to Bethlehem, and found, in the stable, all that the Angel had told them: a lovely new-born Child, wrapped in poor swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger, and the Virgin Mother and St. Joseph kneeling beside it. Knowing from the words of the Angel and still more from a divine light, that this beautiful Child in the manger was the long-desired Saviour of mankind, it is not to be doubted that they worshipped Him with great reverence, and giving due thanks for the grace done to them, offered some gifts according to their station. After this they returned to their flocks, and praising the Lord, they related to others what they had heard and seen.

So much is known to us from the Gospel of St. Luke concerning the Nativity of Our Lord and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

The further considerations, to which we are led by this birth, are so manifold and so great, that whole books filled with them, would not suffice to contain them all. Above all, we should consider the fact, that the only begotten Son of God saw the light of the world in so lowly a place, in the depth of winter and in the silence of the night. No doubt He could have celebrated His visible arrival in this world with grandeur and magnificence in the most noble palace in Jerusalem. But He did not, and why? St. Bernard writes: "Can we then believe that it was by chance that He was born in darkness and in the cold of winter, He who is Lord over winter and summer, day and night? Other children cannot choose the time of their birth, as they have neither reason nor liberty; but Christ, though man, was, as the Son of God, in the beginning with God, and was then the same wise and mighty God He is now. He, as the only begotten Son of God, who could choose for His birth whatever time He pre-

ferred, chose what was most painful and hard for a little child, especially the child of a poor mother, who hardly possessed a few swaddling-clothes to wrap it in." He chose in everything what was most trying to human nature. And for what reason did He do this? The Holy Fathers give the following answers:

First, to show, in the most exquisite manner, His infinite love for us, and to move us to love Him in return. Had Christ been born at another time, in a palace, surrounded by luxuries, He would still have shown great love for us; but it could not have been compared with the love He manifested when born in such a night, in such abject poverty and in so lowly a place. Had He been born rich, we should have great cause to love Him; but how much more reason have we now to love Him, when we consider the manner, so full of love to us, in which He deigned to come into the world. Yes, our beloved Saviour, in the poverty of His birth, evinced His great love, and wishes to gain our entire heart. "He who desired to be beloved by us," says St. Peter Chrysologus, "would be born in this and in no other manner."

Secondly, Christ, our Lord, wished to show us, at His birth, the path that leads to heaven, and to teach by his example what later He would teach by words. "He announces in works, what He afterwards teaches with words," says St. Bernard. Yes, not only He, but the stable, the manger, the swaddling-clothes speak to us, and point to the way we must walk, if we wish to derive benefit from the birth, the passion and death of our Saviour. The immoderate desire of the riches, honors and pleasures of this world, or, as St. John says, "the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life," are the principal sources of all vice, and the principal causes why so many men forfeit heaven and are cast into the depth of hell. The new-born Saviour teaches us, by his abject poverty, the deepest humility, and by voluntarily bearing so many discomforts of place and time, how we may overcome the three concupiscences, destroy the source of three most hurtful vices, and if we are solicitous about our salvation, to despise all that is temporal, or at least not to fasten our heart on it, but to live in due humility, and, by constant mortification, preserve our purity according to our station. The Saviour teaches all this by His example. Hence, the Holy Fathers called the manger, the pulpit of the Divine Child. We are all obliged to listen to this Teacher, who came down from heaven, and to live according to His precepts. The Heavenly Father says the same words now to us, which He proclaimed from heaven when our Saviour was bap-

tized: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him!"

From these reasons why Christ was born in a stable, at so rough a time of the year, and in such humility, follows a twofold lesson for us, which I will add in the words of St. Bernard. The first is: "Let us love the Child in the manger," because the new-born Saviour has so loved us, and desires that we should love Him in return. Let us love Him, but with our whole heart, and in works, not only with the tongue and in words, as He has loved us, not only in words, but in deeds. The second is: "Let us endeavor to resemble this Child in poverty, in humility and in despising temporal pleasures." For here we see the truth of the words which, later in life, Christ spoke to His disciples, when He placed a little child in the midst of them: "If you do not become as this little child, you cannot enter heaven." It is this we should especially consider, in regard to the nativity of Christ, on to-day's festival. Besides, it should be remembered, that this is one of the oldest and most sacred feasts in the whole year, and was instituted by the Apostles themselves. The manger in which the Saviour was laid, and the stable in which He was born, have always been kept in great honor. The wickedness of the heathens erected, on the spot, a temple dedicated to Adonis, that the Christians might be prevented from visiting the holy place; but in the course of time, a magnificent Christian church was built in its stead. Many convents were established at Bethlehem, in one of which St. Jerome spent many years.

Later, the manger, sanctified by Christ, was taken to Rome into the Church of St. Mary Major, where it is still honored at this day. In the holy Chapel, at Paris, are preserved the swaddling-clothes in which the Divine Child was wrapped, and which St. Louis received as a gift from the Emperor Baldwin II.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. Can you consider the beautiful and gracious mystery of Christ's Nativity in all its details, without being moved to the deepest love for your new-born Saviour? Think earnestly, who He is, that out of love for you is born, and at His birth, suffers such privations for your salvation. He who is born, is the only begotten Son of God, who has no need of you, and expects neither benefit nor profit from</p>	<p>you, but seeks only your salvation. He suffers, with the greatest patience, bitter cold, abject poverty, ignominious contempt, and great privation; not because He is forced to it, but voluntarily, and for your welfare. What have you to say to this? Does not a Saviour, loving you so tenderly, deserve your whole heart? Oh! follow then the admonitions of St. Bernard; love the little Child of Bethlehem; love</p>
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your Saviour; love Him with all your strength. But as He has not only loved you in word and affection, but also in deeds, so must you manifest your love in works. This will be done, if, after the exhortation of St Bernard, you endeavor to resemble the little Child of Bethlehem, and go the way to heaven which Christ pointed out when still in the manger. Your Saviour, the little Child of Bethlehem, was obedient to His father, unto the manger in the stable, as later, He was obedient unto death on the Cross. He could have said in the manger, what He said afterwards: "I do always my heavenly father's pleasure." May you also obey the Lord, your God; keep His commandments; do everything that is agreeable to Him; offend Him not. Your Saviour bore patiently, in the manger, for love of you, cold, poverty, disgrace, and many other hardships. Should similar sufferings assail you, allow them not to disturb you in serving the Lord. Think: My Jesus bore all these for love of me; why should I not suffer for love of Him? He Himself has shown me this path to heaven; He walked in it Himself: why should I not follow Him?

II. What would you have done, or how would you have acted, if you had had the happiness to see and to adore, with the pious shepherds, or the Virgin Mother and St. Joseph, the new-born Saviour, lying in the manger? What expressions of astonishment, love and humility would you have uttered? And if the grace had been bestowed upon you to take your Saviour in your arms, to kiss and embrace

Him, how inexpressible would have been the joy of your heart, and your gratitude for so inestimable a favor! Behold, then, who is He that is presented to you in the most holy Eucharist? Is not the same God hidden here in the form of bread, who was lying in the manger, a little Child? This Saviour you can not only see and adore, but also receive into your heart, through holy communion. Faith convinces you of this. Hence St. Bernard says, in a sermon on this festival: "You also, my dear brethren, will find the Child, once wrapped in swaddling-clothes, in the manger of the altar. For, as in times gone by, the Virgin Mother wrapped it in poor swaddling-clothes, so have we hidden it here in the form of bread." This, if you are a Catholic, you undoubtedly believe. With how great zeal and devotion must you therefore prepare yourself for holy Communion! Into what exclamations ought you to break forth before and after it! I leave it to you to consider this. Only this will I call to your memory. Beg the Divine Mother and St. Joseph to impart to you one small spark of the love and devotion that inflamed their hearts on beholding the new-born Saviour. Pray to your loving Redeemer for the favor that St. Margaret of Cortona requested of Him, when He gave her leave to ask Him a grace. She said: "Beloved Saviour, bestow upon me the grace never again to offend Thee." She received what she requested, and so will you receive it, if you pray fervently, and leave nothing undone that is necessary to avoid sin.

TWENTY-SIXTH DAY OF DECEMBER.

ST. STEPHEN, PROTO-MARTYR.

St. Stephen, whom Holy Writ calls a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, full of grace and strength, was the first who had the happiness to give his blood and life for the Gospel of Christ; hence he is called "Proto-martyr." He is also called Archdeacon, because he was the first of those seven men, who were chosen by the Christian community and ordained deacons by the Apostles. Where he was born and who his parents were, is not known; but it is certain that he came from Judea, and had been a disciple of the celebrated Gamaliel, and that, soon after the descent of the Holy Ghost, he had become famous for his zeal in professing the faith, and for his eminent piety; and that he had always enjoyed, among the Jews, the reputation of great wisdom in the divine laws, as well as of an irreproachable character. After having been ordained deacon, he had not only to distribute the alms among the poor, but also to aid the Apostles in their sacred functions, both of which he did most perfectly. There were no longer complaints about the distribution of alms, as it was done with love and faithfulness. He preached with the Apostles the gospel of Christ fearlessly, all through Jerusalem, and was greatly aided by the Almighty, who bestowed upon him the power of working many and great miracles, as is testified in Holy Writ in these words: "Stephen, full of grace and fortitude, did great wonders and signs among the people." The Jews knew that Stephen was exceedingly well-informed in the laws of Moses; but as he preached, with great freedom, the Gospel of Christ, they ventured to dispute with him, to convict him of error by their subtle questions and assertions. At that period, there existed various schools at Jerusalem, in which the Jews were instructed in the laws. Several disciples from each of these schools came to dispute with him; but, notwithstanding their cunning and malice, they were unable to contend with the wisdom with which he spoke. Seeing that he daily converted many to Christ, they became more and more embittered against him, and endeavored to do away with him. They suborned some wicked men to disseminate among the people that Stephen had blasphemed against Moses

and God, and that they themselves had heard it. This stirred up not only the people, but also the Elders and Scribes. Full of rage, they laid hands on him and brought him to the Council, which had assembled on his account, and when the High-priest, Caiphas, and other priests and Pharisees were present, the accusers brought forward their charges, and the suborned witnesses testified to them. "This man," said they, "ceases not to speak words against the holy place and the law. For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the traditions which Moses delivered to us." All present looked fixedly into the face of the accused to notice any change which fear or apprehension might work in it; but, contrary to their expectation, the countenance of the holy Arch-deacon was so illuminated by God, as a sign of his innocence, that they deemed it the face of an Angel, as is said in Holy Writ. And in truth, he might have been called an Angel, not only on account of his angelic purity, but also on account of his fearless zeal in defending the honor of God. Is it therefore, to be wondered at, that an angelic brightness shone in his countenance? "Because he was pure and chaste," writes St. Augustine, "therefore was his face that of an Angel." But notwithstanding this, the assembled judges desisted not from their wicked design. The High-priest asked, whether what his accusers had said and the witnesses testified, was true? The Saint answered in a long speech, full of learning and wisdom, which is to be found in the 7th chapter of the Acts. In it he said much in praise of Moses, and cited his prophecy in regard to the coming of Christ. In conclusion, he reproached them with their obstinacy, and the murder they had committed on the true Messiah. "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so also do you. Which of the prophets have your fathers not persecuted? And they have slain them who foretold of the coming of the Just One, of whom you are now the betrayers and murderers." This reproach the assembled people could not bear. The wildest rage took possession of them, their hearts were torn with fury against St. Stephen. He failed not to perceive it, and knew well that they would sacrifice him to their rage. Hence, he turned his eyes to heaven, to receive thence strength for the approaching struggle. At that moment, he saw Jesus Christ, the Son of God, standing at the right hand of His heavenly Father, as if to assure His faithful servant that He would aid him in his fight. Stephen cried aloud: "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." This caused a terrible outcry in the as-

sembly, and they stopped their ears so as not to hear such blasphemy, and violently assailing him, they cast him from the Council and dragged him out of the city to stone him to death. The false witnesses who, according to the law, were to cast the first stones upon the accused, took off their garments, that they might be more free in the exercise of their cruelty, and gave them in charge of a youth, named Saul, who afterwards became the celebrated St. Paul. Hardly was St. Stephen out of the city, when they began to cast stones upon him. Every one was eager to take part in his death. The Christian hero stood looking unmoved to heaven, invoking Jesus, for whose honor he suffered martyrdom, and said: "Lord Jesus, receive my soul!" After this, kneeling down, to resemble his Saviour, who prayed for His murderers on the Cross, he said: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Having said this, he fell asleep in the Lord, amid a hail of stones.

Some devout men took care to inter the body of the holy Proto-martyr, as Holy Writ tells us. It is believed that the celebrated Scribe, Gamaliel, was the principal among these, and that St. Stephen was buried at a country-seat belonging to Gamaliel, seven miles from Jerusalem, as we related on the third day of August. The Holy Fathers, in their encomiums of St. Stephen, praise his blameless life, his angelic purity, his fearless zeal in proclaiming the Gospel of the Lord, and his strength of mind and constancy; but above all, his heroic love for his persecutors and enemies, for whom he humbly prayed to the Almighty in his last moments. Without doubt, many of those, in consequence of this prayer, received grace from God and were converted. St. Augustine hesitates not to say this of Saul, when he writes: "If St. Stephen had not prayed, the Church would not possess Paul. Paul was raised up, because the prayer of St. Stephen, who was cast down, was accepted by the Almighty. Let us, therefore, continues this Father, commend ourselves to his intercession; for, Christ will surely grant his prayers now more readily, when he intercedes for those who invoke him."

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

Before I give you some special points for practical consideration, I wish you to observe why the Jews were so much embittered against St. Stephen, that they dragged him out of the city and stoned him. You	find no other reason but that the holy Levite preached the truth fearlessly, and laid their vices clearly before their eyes. Ought not the Jews to have given thanks to him and have done penance for their
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sins? For, what he did, was done only from the desire to save them. He wished them to recognize their wickedness, and therefore secure their penance and with it their salvation. Oleaster, an ancient writer, says, that the same happens to-day to many preachers, who represent the awful truths of the faith, and duly reproving the prevailing vices, announce the evident danger of eternal damnation in plain words to the unrepentant. They do so because they are bound to it by their office. They have no other intention than to convert the people and to lead them from the path of vice to that of a Christian life and of salvation. But many become angry at the words of the preacher, stop their ears, will no longer listen to him, no longer endure him. If they dared, they would tear him from the pulpit, cast him out of the city, and who knows if they would not stone him, as the Jews stoned St. Stephen? As they cannot take real stones, they have recourse to moral stones, which according to Oleaster, are defamations, calumnies, and abuse. These they cast at the preacher, and endeavor to make him hateful to others. But how iniquitous is this, and how must it end? I fear it will end as it did with the hardened Jews. Most of them remained in their wickedness and went to destruction. This will be the fate of those who do not listen to the truth, and who abuse, slander and persecute its preachers. Will you be one of them?

Now to the usual instructions.

I. St. Stephen, during his martyrdom, fixes his eyes on the heavens, and sees them open, and Christ standing at the right hand of His heavenly Father; soon after, he kneels down, in the midst of the hail of stones thrown at him, and prays for his executioners: "Lord, lay not this to their charge." First,

learn from this, whither you should turn your eyes, in suffering, that is, upon the Crucifix, as I have already advised you elsewhere, or towards heaven, which is open to you, if you suffer patiently. Jesus is ready to strengthen you, and to reward you eternally, after you have ended your struggle, in submission to His will. Gazing upward will lighten your burden, however heavy it may be, and the contemplation of Christ always ready to strengthen you, will not permit you to become faint-hearted and despondent. Secondly, consider St. Stephen's prayer. St. Maximus writes: "At a moment when another would have forgotten his best friends, the holy Levite thinks of his enemies and persecutors, and prays for them." He had doubtless heard that Christ our Lord had prayed for His enemies, saying: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." This beautiful example of his divine Master, St. Stephen, as a faithful disciple, followed. What are you doing? If you entertain in your heart malice against any one who has wronged you, cleanse your heart from it, and pray yet to-day for all those who have ever offended you. The example of Jesus Christ, your Saviour, demands it of you, who have not suffered as much as He. "If you say to me," writes St. Augustine, "Christ could do it, because He was God and man; I cannot, because I am only human; look at St. Stephen, your fellow-servant. Was he a man, or was he God? Surely he was only human. He was what you are. Well then, if you cannot follow the Lord, follow your fellow-servant; follow St. Stephen; follow all the holy Martyrs. They were men; they were your fellow-servants."

II. St. Stephen beholds the heavens open, and enters into it by his heroic martyrdom. Heaven is also

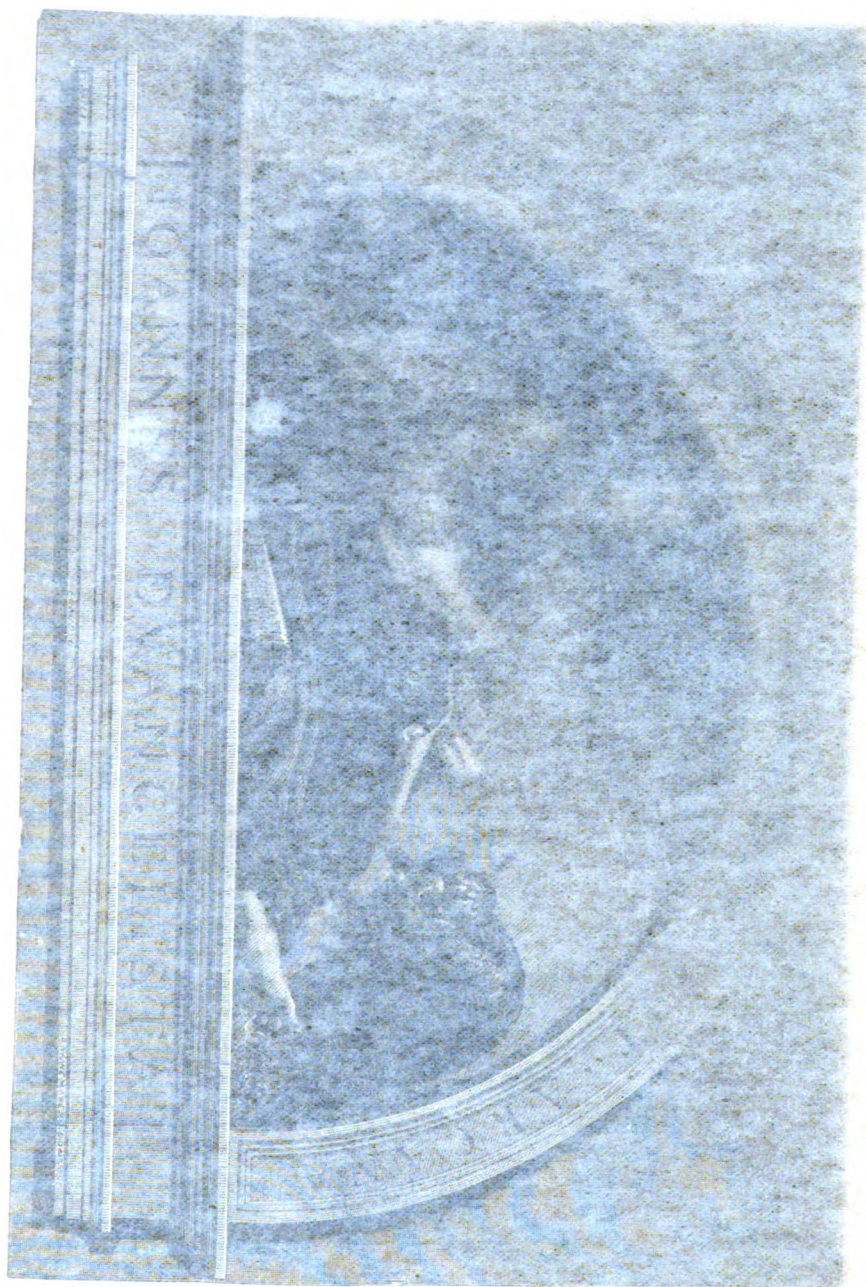
open to you ; it is open to all men. You, as well as all men, may be saved. There is none who can truthfully say that he cannot gain salvation. Oh ! how great a consolation, especially for those who are oppressed here on earth, and have many trials ! How great a consolation for sinners ! To all men heaven is open ; all may enter it ; all may gain salvation ; because all, with the grace of God, can do what God requires of them. But do not forget, that heaven is open to you only whilst you live ; that is, as long as you are in this life, you can do all that is necessary to gain salvation ; but after your death, this will be no longer possible. Hence, if you have neglected to work out your salvation, death closes for you the gates of heaven for all eternity. As you do not know how long you will live, or when your last hour will come, you do not know how long, how many weeks, years, months, or days, heaven will remain open to you. There is no day, no hour, in which it may not be forevermore closed. If then it is your earnest desire to gain heaven, postpone not for a day that upon which you know your salvation depends. And to be still more incited to do this, think of this terrible truth : hell is open to receive you, hell is open to receive all men. You may be damned, and there is nobody that may not be damned. Why ? You may commit sin, and die in it ; and thus be condemned for ever-

more ; for, those who die in mortal sin will be condemned. There is none who is not liable to sin ; none who may not die in it, and hence be lost for all eternity. Can you think of this truth without fear ? Besides this, think that hell is open to you as long as you live ; you may be condemned even in your last hour, because you may even then become guilty of sin. Do you not tremble while earnestly representing hell to yourself ? Trembling alone, however, does not help you. You must endeavor to escape hell by works. You can escape it, because you can avoid that which leads to hell ; you can do what God requires of you to escape the eternal flames. Well then, work, do everything that you know is necessary to escape hell, and in the same manner, do, in remembrance of heaven, everything that God requires of you to enter there. Say sometimes to yourself : " Heaven and hell are open to me. I can be saved ; I can be damned. I will do everything to be saved, and will do it without delay ; for I do not know how long heaven will remain open to me. Perhaps I shall die soon ; if so, I shall then be able to do nothing further to gain salvation ; heaven once closed to me, will never again open its gates to admit me, even if I were to cry a thousand times with the foolish Virgins : " Lord, Lord, open to us." The answer would be : " Amen, I say to you, I know you not." (Matt., xxv.)

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY OF DECEMBER.

ST. JOHN, APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST.

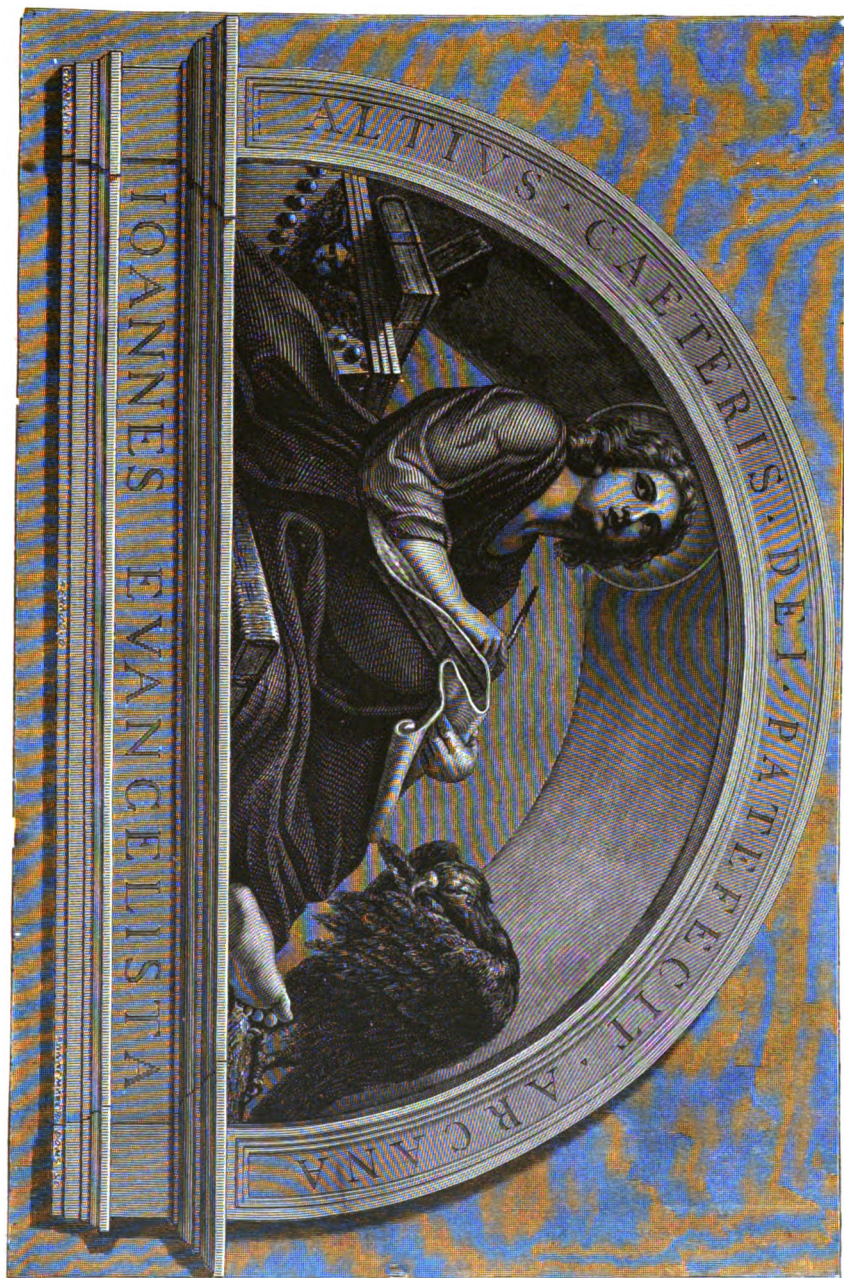
St. John, Apostle and Evangelist of Jesus Christ, a brother of St. James, and son of Zebedee and Salome, was born at Bethsaida, a town in Galilee. Christ, our Lord, called him and his brother James to follow Him, at the time when they were mending their nets in a boat on the shore of the Sea of Genesareth. John, without delay, left all he possessed, even his own father, and, with his brother, followed the Lord. Although the youngest of the Apostles, he was beloved by the Saviour above all the others; whence he is several times mentioned in the Gospel, as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." The cause of this special love of Jesus for him, was, according to the Holy Fathers, his virginal purity, which he kept undefiled, and the tender love he bore to the Lord. "He was more beloved than all the other Apostles," writes St. Thomas Aquinas, "on account of his purity." "For the same reason," says St. Anselm, "God revealed more mysteries to him than to the other Apostles. Justly," says he, "did Christ the Lord reveal the greatest mysteries to him, because he surpassed all in virginal purity." It is evident from the Gospel that St. John was one of the most intimate of the friends of the Lord, and was, in consequence, sometimes admitted into Christ's presence, when, except Peter and James, no other Apostle was allowed to be near. Thus, he was with Christ when He healed the mother-in-law of Peter; when He raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead; and when He was transfigured on Mount Thabor. He also accompanied Christ when He suffered His agony in the Garden of Olives. The other two above-named Apostles shared these favors with John; but none was permitted to lean upon the Saviour's bosom, at the last supper, save John; none was recommended as son to the divine Mother, but John. Only he, of all the Apostles, followed Christ to Mount Calvary, and remained there with Him until His death. To recompense this love, Christ gave him to His Mother as her son, when He said: "Behold thy Mother!" Christ, who had lived in virginal chastity, would trust His Virgin Mother to no one else but John, who himself lived in virginal purity. As St. Jerome says: "Christ, a virgin, recommended Mary, a virgin, to John, a virgin." No greater grace could John have asked of Christ; no more evident proof could he have re-



TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY OF THE MONTH.

ST. JOHN, APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST.

St. John, Apostle and Evangelist of Jesus Christ, was the youngest of St. Thomas's twelve Apostles, and the son of Zebedee, and of Salome, a sister of Bethsaida in Galilee. Christ, and His Father, and His brother James, recommended the three in a boat on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. John, without delay, left all he possessed, and followed His Father, and, with His brother, followed the Lord. Although the youngest of the Apostles, he was beloved by the Saviour above all the others; whence he is several times mentioned in the Gospel, as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." The cause of this special love of Jesus for him, was, according to the Holy Fathers, his virginal purity, which he kept undefiled, and the love he bore to the Lord. "He was more beloved than all the other Apostles," writes St. Thomas Aquinas, "on account of his purity." "For the same reason," says St. Anselm, "God revealed more mysteries to him than to the other Apostles. Justly," says he, "did Christ, the Lord, reveal the greatest mysteries to him, because he surpassed all in virginal purity." It is evident from the Gospel that St. John was one of the most intimate of the friends of the Lord, and was, in consequence, sometimes admitted into Christ's presence, when, except Peter and James, no other Apostle was allowed to be near. Thus, he was with Christ when He healed the cripple-child of Peter; when He raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead; and when He was transfigured on Mount Thabor. He also accompanied Christ when He suffered His agony in the Garden of Olives. The other two above-mentioned Apostles shared these favors with John; but none was permitted to lean upon the Saviour's bosom, at the last supper, save John, none was recommended as son to the divine Mother, but John. Only he, of all the Apostles, followed Christ to Mount Calvary, and remained there with Him until His death. To recompense this love, Christ gave him to His Mother as her son, when He said: "Behold thy Mother!" Christ, who lived in virginal chastity, would trust His Virgin Mother to no one else but John, who himself lived in virginal purity. As St. Jerome says: "Christ, a virgin, recommended Mary, a virgin, to John, a virgin." No greater grace could John have asked of Christ, no more evident proof could he have re-



ceived of His love. The most precious thing which the Lord possessed on earth, His holy Mother, He commended to His beloved disciple. He took him as brother, by giving Him as son to His mother. Who cannot see from all this that Christ loved and honored St. John above all others? How deeply this beloved disciple must have suffered by seeing his Saviour die so ignominious a death, is easily to be conceived; and St. Chrysostom hesitates not to call him, therefore, a manifold martyr. After Christ had died on the Cross, had been taken from it, and interred with all possible honors, St. John returned home with the divine Mother, who was now also his mother, and waited for the glorious resurrection of the Lord. When this had taken place, he participated in the many apparitions of the Lord, by which the disciples were comforted, and doubtless received again particular marks of love from the Saviour. He afterwards assisted, with the divine Mother and the Apostles, and other disciples of Christ, at the wonderful Ascension of the Lord. With these, also, he received, after a ten days' preparation, the Holy Ghost, on the great festival of Pentecost. Soon after this, he and Peter had, before all others, the grace to suffer for Christ's sake. For when these two Apostles had, in the name of Christ, miraculously healed a poor cripple who was lying at the door of the temple of Jerusalem, and improved this opportunity to show to the assembled people that Jesus of Nazareth was the true Messiah, they were seized, at the instigation of the chief priests, and were cast into prison. On the following day, the priests came together, and John and Peter were called before them, and asked in whose name, and by what power they had healed the cripple. Peter and John answered fearlessly, that it had been done in the name of Jesus Christ. The high priest dared not do anything further to them, but, setting them free, prohibited them from preaching, in future, the name of Christ. The two holy Apostles, however, nothing daunted, said: "If it be just in the sight of God to hear you rather than God, judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

St. John remained for some time in Jerusalem after this, and, with the other Apostles, was zealous in his endeavors to convert the Jews. When the Apostles separated, to preach the gospel over all the world, Asia Minor was assigned to St. John. Going thither, he began with great zeal his apostolic functions, and, by the gift of miracles, he converted many thousands to the faith of Christ. The many bishoprics which he instituted in the principal cities sufficiently prove this. In the course of time, he went also to other countries, preaching everywhere, with equal success, the word of Christ. The Emperor Domitian, who, after the death

of the Emperor Nero, again began to persecute the Christians, ordered his officers to apprehend John, and bring him to Rome. Hardly had the holy Apostle arrived there, when he was commanded by the Emperor to sacrifice to the gods. As the Saint refused this, and fearlessly confessed Christ, the Emperor had him most cruelly scourged, and afterwards cast into a large caldron, filled with boiling oil. The Saint signed himself and the caldron with the holy cross, and remained unharmed when he was cast into it. This gave him an opportunity to announce, with great energy, to the assembled people, the gospel of Jesus Christ. The tyrant, who could not suffer this, had him taken out of the caldron, and sentenced him to banishment on the island of Patmos, to work in the mines, and perform other hard labor, in company with other Christians. St. John had, at that time, reached his ninetieth year, but was willing to undergo the unjust sentence. After his arrival on the island, he had many and wonderful visions, which, by command of God, he put down in writing. The book which contains them is a part of Holy Writ, called the Apocalypse, or Revelation of St. John, a book which, according to St. Jerome, contains almost as many mysteries as words. After the death of Domitian, St. John was liberated, and returning to Ephesus, remained there until his death. He outlived all the other Apostles, as he reached the age of 100 years. His great labors, wearisome travels, and the many hardships he endured, at last enfeebled him to such an extent, that he could not go to the church without being carried. Frequently he repeated, in his exhortations, the words: "My little children, love one another." Some, annoyed at this, asked him why he so often repeated these words. He answered: "Because it is the commandment of the Lord; and if that is done, it suffices." By this he meant, that if we love each other rightly, we also love God; and when we love God and our neighbor, no more is needed to gain salvation; as love to God and to our neighbor contains the keeping of all other commandments.

The holy Apostle, who had suffered and labored so much for his beloved Master, was, at length, in the year 104, called by Him into heaven to receive his eternal reward.

Besides the Apocalypse, to which we referred above, St. John also wrote three Epistles and his Gospel, on account of which he is called Evangelist. In his Gospel he gives many more facts than the other Evangelists, to prove the divinity of Jesus Christ; as, at that period, several heretics, as Cerinthus, Ebion, and the Nicolaites fought against this truth. In his Epistles, he exhorts particularly to love God and our neighbor, and to avoid heretics. In the first, among other

things, he explains that love to God consists in keeping the commandments of God, which are not difficult to keep. "For this is the charity of God," writes he, "that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not heavy." Of the love of our neighbor he says, that it must manifest itself in works, that is, we must assist our brethren in their need, and, if necessary, give even our lives for them, after the example of Christ. The holy Apostle exemplified his words by his actions. Several holy fathers relate the following of him. The Saint had given a youth in charge of a bishop, with the commendation to instruct him carefully in virtue and sacred sciences. After some years, when the Saint returned to this bishop, and asked for the young man, he heard with deep sorrow that he had secretly left, and had joined the highwaymen, and had even become their chief. The holy Apostle set out at once, and went, not without danger to his life, into the woods, where the unhappy young man was said to be. Finding him, he spoke most kindly to him, and succeeded in bringing him back. It is touching to read how the holy man promised to atone for the youth's sins, if he would repent, and lead a better life. The youth followed the Saint's admonition, and did penance with such fervor and zeal that the Saint hesitated not to give him charge of the church at Ephesus.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Virginal chastity, which St. John preserved inviolate, was the principal reason why Christ the Lord loved him above all others, recommended him to His beloved mother, gave her to him as mother, and bestowed many other graces upon him. For nothing is more certain than what I have already more than once said to you; whoever preserves angelic purity, will have God as a friend and protector. But who will be the friend of him who is a slave to the vice of unchastity? Surely neither the Almighty, nor Angels, nor Saints; none but the unclean spirit; for he, as I told you only a few days ago, has the greatest pleasure in the vice of unchastity, which gains him more souls than all the other vices. Whose love and friendship do you

seek? The love of Jesus Christ, or of the devil? Your lips tell me that you seek the friendship of the Lord, and not that of Satan. But your works—do they speak the same language? The boldness of your eyes, your tongue and your manners, your frequent and frivolous associations with those of the other sex; and your equivocal or openly licentious speeches and songs, are surely no signs that you love chastity with your whole heart and endeavor to gain the love of Christ. Correct yourself in every point in which you need correction, or you can never expect to have Christ as your friend; neither can you hope to have the Mother of Jesus as your mother. She was given to the chaste John as a mother, and John, chaste and pure, was given to her as

a son. If you would be a true child of Mary, if you wish Mary to be your mother, and to enjoy her motherly care and protection, as well during your life as in your dying hour, endeavor to live chaste according to your station, and avoid all that is against the purity required of you.

II. "My dear children, love one another." This was the admonition that St. John gave to the Christians. In his Epistles, he also commends nothing more earnestly than this. He teaches, however, that we must not only love with the tongue and in words, but in deed and in truth. Love to God must manifest itself in keeping the commandments of God, as he teaches in the following words: "For this is the charity of God, that we keep his commandments." (I John, v.) Those who do not endeavor to keep them, must not say that they truly love

God. Love to our neighbor must be made manifest by observing the words of Christ: "All things, therefore, whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them." (Matthew, vii.) "This sentence," says St. Paulinus, "we should have constantly before our eyes, and daily examine ourselves, if and how we have obeyed God's command." And it is this which I counsel you to-day to observe. For, you ought to know, that it is necessary for salvation, to love God and our neighbor with our whole heart; God, by keeping His commandments; our neighbor, by doing to him as we would wish that he should do to us. "Let nobody imagine that he will gain salvation by fasting, praying and other good works, who does not truly love God and his neighbor." Thus speaks St. Cyril of Alexandria.

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY OF DECEMBER.

THE FEAST OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS.

By the Holy Innocents, who are honored as martyrs to-day by the Catholic Church, we understand those happy infants, who, by the command of King Herod, were put to death, for no other cause than that the new-born King of the Jews might be deprived of life. When Christ was born, Herod, well known for his cruelty, reigned at Jerusalem. He was not of the Jewish nation, but a foreigner, and was therefore hated by the Jews. Herod knew this well; hence he feared that they would dethrone him, and he had several illustrious persons executed, whom he suspected of aspiring to the throne. Meanwhile it happened that the three Magi or Kings from the East came to Jerusalem, to find and adore the new-born King, who had been announced to them by a star; as they doubted not that they would learn more of Him in the capital of Judea. They therefore asked

without hesitation: "Where is he, that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and have come to adore him." This question seemed very strange to the Jews, and the news of it spread through the whole city, until it reached the King. His fear can hardly be described; for he already believed his crown and sceptre lost. To escape the danger in which he supposed himself, he called the chief priests and scribes together, and inquired of them where the Messiah should be born. They answered: "In Bethlehem, according to the Prophets." Satisfied with this answer, Herod had the three wise men brought to court, and speaking very confidentially with them, he asked diligently when and where the star had appeared to them. After this, he advised them to go to Bethlehem and inquire after the new-born child, and when they had found and adored it, to return and inform him, as he wished to go and adore it also. These words of the king, who was not less cunning than cruel, were only a deceit, as he had already resolved to kill the new-born child. Meanwhile the Magi followed the advice of the king, and, guided by the star, which again appeared to them when they had left Jerusalem, went to Bethlehem, found and adored the divine Child, and offered gold, frankincense and myrrh, as we read in Holy Writ. Having finished their devotion, they intended, in accordance with king Herod's wish, to bring him word that they had happily found the Child. An angel, however, appeared to them in their sleep and admonished them not to return to Jerusalem, but to go into their own country by another way; which they accordingly did. When Herod perceived that they had deluded him, it was too late, and his rage was boundless. Hearing of what had taken place in the temple, at the Purification of Mary, that the venerable Simeon had pronounced a child, which he had taken into his arms, the true Messiah, the King's heart was filled with inexpressible fear and anxiety. The danger in which he was, as he imagined, of losing his crown, left him no peace day or night. He secretly gave orders to search for this child; but all was of no avail; it could not be found. After long pondering how he might escape the danger, his unbounded ambition led him to an act of cruelty unprecedented in history. He determined to murder all the male children, in and around Bethlehem, that were not over two years of age, as he thought that thus he could not fail to take the life of the child so dangerous to him. This fearful design was executed amidst the despairing shrieks of the parents, especially the mothers. How many children were thus inhumanly slaughtered is not known, but the number must have been very large. Yet the tyrant gained not his end; for, the

divine Child was already in security. The Gospel tells us that an Angel appeared during the night to St. Joseph, saying to him: "Arise, take the child and his mother, and fly into Egypt, and remain there until I tell thee. For, it will come to pass that Herod will seek the child to destroy him." St. Joseph delayed not to obey, and fled, the same night, with the child and his mother, into the land indicated to him. As this had happened before Herod executed his cruel determination, God thus frustrated the plot. Herod soon after, received his just punishment. Several terrible maladies suddenly seized him, as Josephus, the Jewish historian, relates. An internal fever consumed him, and all his limbs were covered with abominable ulcers, breeding vermin. His feet were swollen; his neck, shoulders and arms drawn together, and his breast so burdened, that the unfortunate man could hardly breathe, while his whole body exhaled so offensive an odor, that neither he nor others could endure it. Hence, in despair, he frequently cried for a knife or a sword, that he might end his own life. In this miserable condition, he ceased not his cruelties, and only five days before his death, he had his son, Antipater, put to death. As he had good reason to believe that the entire people would rejoice at his death, he wished at least to take to the grave the thought that many should grieve, if not for him, at least for their friends and relatives. Hence, he had the chief men of the nobility imprisoned, and gave orders to his sister Salome, that, as soon as he had closed his eyes, they were all to be murdered. This order, however, was not executed by Salome, who justly loathed its cruelty. In this lamentable condition, the cruel tyrant ended his life, but began one in eternity whose pains and torments were still more unendurable, and from which he cannot hope ever to be released; while the innocent children massacred by him, rejoice for all eternity in the glories of heaven, giving humble thanks to God for having thus admitted them into His presence. The Catholic Church has always honored them as martyrs; because, though not confessing Christ with their lips, as many thousands of others have done, yet they confessed Him with their death, by losing their lives for His sake.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. How happy were the innocent children to end their lives at so tender an age! Had they lived longer, they might have been among</p>	<p>those who cried: "Crucify him! Crucify him!" and have gone to destruction. The parents of these children naturally wept and lament-</p>
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ed, and believed themselves most unhappy, because their children were torn from them and cruelly slaughtered. They did not recognize the mercy that God showed them. Still, at this day, does the Almighty sometimes take children, by an early death, from their parents. That the latter feel this loss and weep and mourn over it, is but human, and is no sin; but they do wrong if they grieve inordinately, or even murmur or complain against the decrees of the Almighty. They ought to think, God is the Lord of life and death; He has given the children; He can take them away again, without wronging any one. They should also think that an early death may be a great benefit to themselves and to their children; for, God perhaps foresaw that the parents would neglect the education of their children and thus condemn themselves, or that the children would lead a wicked life, and thus go to eternal perdition. By taking them thus early, He benefits the children and the parents, and deserves thanks instead of complaint. At least, the parents ought to submit to the divine will, and say from the depth of their hearts, what they have often said with their lips: "O Lord, thy will be done."

II. Herod undoubtedly did great sin in massacring, without just reason, so many innocent children. In our days, there are many who deprive an innocent child of its mortal life, or even endeavor to deprive it of the life to come. To the former of these belong all mothers, who destroy the fruit of their womb by imprudence or even by crime. In the same manner, those men, who ill-treat their wives, frequently become guilty of the same sin. Mothers again are guilty of it, who crush their children in sleep. To the second class belong

those who murder their children before they are baptized, for without baptism they can never enter the kingdom of heaven. Secondly, all those persons who give scandal to innocent youth, either in word or deed; for example, when they speak impurely in their presence, sing bad songs, behave immodestly, or even entice them to do wrong. Thirdly, according to St. Chrysostom, those parents belong to this class, who, either by their example, or by neglecting to instruct their children, are the cause of many sins which their children commit. Further, those who do not duly punish their children, and who do not earnestly endeavor to prevent their doing wrong. Lastly, all those who lead their own children into the path of wickedness and sin. All these are child-murderers. Of the latter, St. Chrysostom says: "Thus, parents, I say, are more vicious, more cruel than child-murderers; for, a murderer of children, as Herod was, separates only the body from the soul; while the others give the souls and bodies of their children to eternal flames. Further, those who are killed would have died in the course of time, though they had not been murdered; while children neglected by their parents, might have avoided eternal death, had not the wickedness of their parents prepared it for them. Besides this, the general resurrection would have compensated for the bodily death, while the death and destruction of the soul nothing can restore. A child, condemned by the parent's fault, has no hope of salvation, but has to suffer eternal pains. Hence I am right in saying that such parents are worse than child-murderers." As there is no doubt that all the above-mentioned classes of people commit great sin, they make themselves guilty of eternal punishment. Those who

give scandal to the young should remember the terrible menace of Jesus Christ: "He that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in Me, it were better for him that a mill-stone should be hanged about his neck and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea. Wo to that man by whom scandal cometh!" "Wo to him," exclaimed, one day, a dying man, "who has led me to evil." "And how will these corrupted souls, one day, cry for vengeance at the throne

of the Almighty," says St. Thomas of Villanova; "how will they rage in hell against him who corrupted them or gave them scandal!" They also, who murder only the bodies of their children, will have to render an account, and may expect terrible punishment. The blood of their children will cry for vengeance against them, as did the blood of Abel against Cain. "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth to me from the earth." (Genesis, iv.)

TWENTY-NINTH DAY OF DECEMBER.

ST. THOMAS, ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

Glorious and celebrated is the great Archbishop, St. Thomas, on account of his fortitude in defending the rights of the Christian Church. He was born at London, in England, of noble, pious and rich parents, who led him early in the path of virtue, and had him carefully instructed in the arts and sciences. Thomas progressed rapidly in both, and gained so high an esteem among both clergy and laity, that Henry II. chose him as Chancellor of the kingdom. He discharged his functions to the entire satisfaction of king and people, until the episcopal See of Canterbury became vacant by the death of Theobald, who had long since ordained Thomas deacon. The king, of his own free will, appointed Thomas as successor to the late archbishop. Thomas refused, for a long time, to obey the king's wish, but at length, recognizing the will of the Almighty, he accepted the high but burthensome dignity. No sooner had he done this, than he renounced every bodily enjoyment, and in consideration of the grave duties of his station, endeavored so to conduct himself, that his life might shine as a bright example to those under him. Zeal for the honor of God and the salvation of his flock took entire possession of his heart, so that he left nothing undone to further both. The poor and needy enjoyed the greater part of his income; while he used the rest for his own maintenance, being far from delighting in pride or

luxury, but devoted to mortifying himself continually. So edifying a mode of life made the new Archbishop agreeable both to God and men. But when he claimed several ecclesiastical benefices, which had been unjustly taken from the church, the usurpers of these estates roused a part of the people against their shepherd, disseminated scandalous reports against him, and endeavored to withdraw from him the love and esteem of the king. At that time, two ecclesiastics had committed grievous faults; and when St. Thomas wished to punish them, some of the courtiers told the king that he, as Lord of the land, should claim the right of judging and punishing as well the clergy as the laity; that he had the power over all, and ought not to permit any encroachment on his rights; and that it was a disgrace to him that the clergy were independent of his power. Not content with this, they persuaded the king to issue laws entirely contrary to the rights and liberties of the church, but approved by the highest nobility of the kingdom, and even by many bishops, whom fear had influenced.

St. Thomas boldly resisted these laws, ready rather to die than consent to anything that was against the vow he had made to God and the Church. This lost him the king's favor; and seeing that still greater disturbances might arise if he remained in the country, he secretly left the court, and with two ecclesiastics, went to Rome, related to the Pope what had taken place, and begged him to appoint another Archbishop of Canterbury. The Pope praised his constancy, but would not listen to his request, but advised him to live in retirement, until the king should come to the knowledge of his fault. Hence, the holy archbishop went into the Cistercian monastery of Pontigni, in France, and lived there in great austerity and holiness, until he was informed that the king of England had notified the Abbot of Pontigni that he would destroy every monastery of his Order in England, unless his enemy, Thomas, were dismissed. The holy man then voluntarily left Pontigni, in order that his presence might not cause evil to the Order. Louis, king of France, informed of this, came to meet the exiled Archbishop, and took him to another monastery at Sens, which was named after St. Columba. Here he remained until the king of England became reconciled to him. Thus, after seven years, St. Thomas returned to his see, and was received by his flock with inexpressible joy. The Saint discharged his functions as before with great zeal, not in the least complaining of the wrong that had been done to him. But his enemies gave him no peace, they accused him of conspiring against the kingdom and the general welfare of the people, and even of aspiring to the crown. Senseless and plainly

false as these accusations were, still they made an impression upon the king, who, in his wrath, said more than once: "Can I have no peace in my kingdom on account of one single priest? Is there no one who will free me from so proud and obstinate a man?" Some of those, who heard these words, supposed that the king would regard them with great favor if they would rid him of the bishop. Hence, they gathered together, went to Canterbury and entered the church, where the holy man was at Vespers. The priests present, when they heard of the arrival of the murderers, would have closed the doors of the church; but St. Thomas would not permit it. "The Church," said he, "is no fort where one prepares for an attack. I am willing to sacrifice my life for the Church of God." During this time, the murderers pressed into the church, and one of them exclaimed on entering: "Where is Thomas, the traitor?" "I am here!" answered the holy man, "but I am no traitor. I am a priest of God, and ready to give my blood for God and His Church. But, in the name of the Almighty, I forbid you to hurt one of my people." He then knelt before the altar and commended himself and his church to God, the Divine Mother, St. Dionysius and other patrons. He had hardly finished his prayer, when the most daring of the murderers gave him so violent a stroke with his sword, that he clove the holy archbishop's head. The others followed and maltreated the Saint so cruelly, that his brains were scattered over the steps leading to the altar, and the pavement before it was covered with blood. After this, they demolished the episcopal palace, and destroyed everything upon which they could lay their hands. The religious and priests, who, in fear and trembling, had endeavored to flee, returned, after the departure of the assassins from the church, called the other ecclesiastics, and with great veneration, interred the body of the murdered Saint. In taking off his clothing, they found a hair-shirt, which the Saint had always worn. This sad and, at the same time, cruel event took place in the year of our Lord, 1170.

The king, who, although he had not desired the assassination of the archbishop, had occasioned it by his angry words, did severe and public penance. The murderers were punished by the Almighty. He who had dealt the blow, after long internal suffering, in rage and despair, tore his own body with his teeth, and cut with knives one piece after another from it, until he miserably expired. The other three, who had laid their sacrilegious hands on the holy archbishop, wandered insane and trembling through England, for three years, and at last ended their lives in despair. They were frequently heard to exclaim;

"The vengeance, the punishment of God has overtaken us." The tomb of St. Thomas was glorified by many miracles, and all England honored him as a Saint, until the time of Henry VIII, who separating from the Catholic Church, proclaimed himself head of the English church. This king, in a most unprecedented manner, summoned St. Thomas, who had been dead 490 years, to appear in court, and there sentenced him as a convicted traitor. In consequence of this act, his holy relics were exhumed, burned to ashes and then given to the winds. At the same time, a royal command was issued, no longer to call the archbishop holy or to invoke him as a Saint. The real cause of this proceeding was, that St. Thomas had been so fearless a defender of the rights and privileges of the Church of God and of the Apostolic See, upon which Henry VIII. would set his foot, while, at the same time, he laid violent hands on the dead, who had so bravely protected them. So far goes the rage of heresy, regarding neither Christian nor heathen laws; sparing neither the dead nor the living; and not hesitating to dishonor God and His Saints.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

Some godless noblemen plotted against St. Thomas of Canterbury, who, as in duty bound, defended the rights of the Church. In our days there are thousands and hundreds of thousands who join secret societies, which in their way labor to overthrow the Church and her rights.

The Holy Fathers call Satan the ape of God. Lucifer had only too well perceived how greatly the assemblies of the Catholics in the catacombs had contributed to the spread of the gospel in the first century, and he has seen in all ages, what help the Church received from her many religious orders, congregations, associations and brotherhoods. Hence his hatred against these institutions. On his side, therefore, he endeavors by means of secret societies and associations, to ruin the foundation of the Church and to overthrow the work of God. That he

may have easier play, he seeks to cover the end and aim of these societies under honorable names, such as the rights of man, philanthropy, humanity, enlightenment, advancement, culture, pretending that these associations are only mutual-aid societies, founded through pure humanity, and that every Catholic might join them without burdening his conscience. But, dear reader, let not this syren song deceive you. Under the honey of sweet words is hidden the deadly poison. Hear and consider well what I tell you of the wickedness of these associations, which are called secret societies. If you converse with people who endeavor to entice you into their net, they will say: "Why will you not join us, though you are a Catholic? We know one religion only: to believe in God, and be honest, that is sufficient." Answer: "If you do not regard the religion of a man, this in itself is a bad sign

which induces me not to join you. I esteem religion and cannot join men to whom it is indifferent." In fact, no Catholic ever joined a secret society, and became thereby better, more zealous or more pious; on the contrary, such persons sink only too soon into entire indifference in regard to matters of faith, and become scoffers.

Besides this, how can a Catholic join a secret society? He would be excommunicated and cease to be a Catholic; which means, that the Church would expel him from the community of the faithful and refuse him the Sacraments and Christian burial. How blind are those who think they can belong to secret societies and yet remain Catholics! They ought to be ashamed that they know so little of the consequences of excommunication. But they will say: why does the Church excommunicate secret societies, as they are only associations for mutual aid? Answer: They are apparently mutual aid associations, but in reality, they injure and destroy the root of brotherly love, which says, without making any distinction: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," hence, also, aid him as thyself. And though it is impossible for us to practice this commandment literally in regard to all men on earth, yet we must observe it in favor of those with whom we come in contact, on principles very different from those on which secret societies are based. An example will make this clear. Travelling on the Pacific ocean, I met on board of a steamer the agent of an American lodge of free-masons, with whom was his wife, who was an excellent Catholic. I said to this agent: "Dear Sir, would it not be far better for you to learn what the

Church teaches and become a Catholic?"

He replied: "The Church would not accept me." "I know the reason," said I, smiling, "you are a mason." "I am," answered he, "and everybody ought to be one; masonry is pure brotherly love." "On the contrary," said I, "the principles of masonry wound true charity in its very root. I will prove it to you immediately. Listen to that man near us, what abominable language he uses!" "I think him," he said, "a very bad fellow." "Suppose now," I continued, "that I should fall overboard, and that fellow too, and that you had only one rope, to whom would you throw that rope in order to save him?" "Of course to you, father." "But he makes a sign to you that he is a mason, and should another mason stand by your side what would he say? would he not say: 'that is a mason, pull him out and let the priest be drowned.' Is that right?"

Secondly: to take an oath of secrecy for something that one does not know, cannot be done by an honest man. An honest man will say: "No, I do not promise silence, unless your secret is something good; if it is bad, I will not conceal it, but do my duty. And to bind myself to fulfil blindly any order that may be given, is repugnant to my sense of freedom. I do not wish to make myself a slave."

"Well, if you speak thus, we will not aid you." Answer: "Then God will aid me; I trust more in Him than in you."

Oh! how many a mason has said: "Had I trusted more in God than in men, than in this society, I should not have been visited by misfortune."

Lastly, "by their fruits shall ye

know them," says Christ. Masons, and their affiliated societies, may say a hundred times that they do not trouble themselves about church and religion; yet all the outrages which are done to the Church in our days are only the consequence; of the labors of the secret societies, whose grand-masters are the princes of the earth and their counsellors. It is true that the brothers of the lower grades suspect and know but little of all this; they are used only as tools. Besides, a Catholic must believe that the Church, inspired and guided by the Holy Ghost, has reasons for condemning such societies and that she would not be so strongly opposed to them, if they were not so

dangerous to the salvation of souls. The Church is our mother and we are bound to obey her voice; we cannot fail in this, without paying dearly for our folly.

A solicitous mother not only sees that her child, when wounded, is healed, but also takes care to keep it out of danger.

Father of a family! would you suffer your children to hold secret assemblies in your house during the night and not permit you to know what they do? In the same manner and by the same right, the Church, our Mother, acts in not permitting her children to join societies, with whose workings, not even the confessor can be made acquainted.

THIRTIETH DAY OF DECEMBER.

ST. ANYSIA, VIRGIN AND MARTYR; AND ST. COLUMBA, VIRGIN AND MARTYR.

In the reign of Maximian, the cruel persecutor of the Christians, there lived at Thessalonica, a virgin, named Anysia, who was known and esteemed through the whole city on account of her virtues. She was born of Christian parents, and very piously educated. Inheriting great riches, after the early death of her parents, she feared to fall, by the misuse of them, into vice, and therefore she resolved to employ them only for the comfort of the poor, the sick and prisoners. Generous as was this resolution, she was faithful in carrying it into execution. She visited the sick and prisoners, and provided them with all they needed. To the poor and suffering she gave until she had nothing left; and taking up her abode in a small house, she maintained herself by the labor of her hands. She spent her days in fasting and prayer, visiting the Church, devout reading and work, and passed the greater part of the night in singing psalms. Her bed was the floor, her sleep short, and her dress made of sack-cloth. She seldom prayed without shedding many tears, and her only wish was to be admitted soon into the presence of her beloved Spouse, to whom she had consecrated her virginity. But

she desired to appear before Him only as a martyr. "Let me partake of Thy bitter sufferings," she prayed to the Lord, "and do with me according to Thy holy will." She feared to live long in the world amid so many dangers; hence she sighed for death, which would free her from all danger of offending God. An Angel appeared to her, and brought her the welcome message that her wish would soon be fulfilled; hence she prepared herself with great zeal, looking upon each day as her last on earth. Thus, filled with heavenly aspirations, she, one day, repaired to church, where she was seen by one of the imperial soldiers, who, hastening to her, said: "Stay! whither are you going?" The chaste virgin was at first startled at this unexpected question, but soon composing herself, she called on God, as the protector of her chastity, made the sign of the holy Cross upon her forehead, and passed on without answering the insolent man. Following her, he repeated his question: "Who are you and whither are you going?" "I am a handmaid of Jesus Christ," said Anyisia, "and am going to Church." "I will not let you go, but take you with me to worship the gods," said the soldier; and seizing the veil that covered the head of the holy virgin, he endeavored to take it away. Anyisia defended herself with all her strength, spat in his face and said: "Away with you; the Lord will punish you." Enraged at this he drew his sword, and, running it through her body, killed her on the spot. Thus was her wish fulfilled, and she went, as a chaste virgin and martyr, to her beloved Spouse, after whom she had sighed so fervently.



To this short biography, we add that of another holy virgin and martyr, although her festival will not be commemorated till to-morrow. This is St. Columba, who was born in Spain, of rich but heathen parents. God bestowed on her, from her early youth, so strong an inclination to the Christian faith, that she could never be persuaded by her parents to worship the gods. As she found no opportunity, under her father's roof, of being instructed in the faith, she fled from her home, and, accompanied by several companions, went to France, although she had hardly reached her sixteenth year. At Vienne, in France, she was instructed in the Christian faith, and baptized. From Vienne she went to Sens, where, entirely devoted to prayer, fasting and other good works, she converted many souls to God by her edifying life. The Emperor Aurelian, well known as an enemy to the Christians, came to Sens, searching for the faithful, either to force them to abandon their God, or to execute them, Columba

and her companions were among the first who were brought before him. He asked her, who she was, and whence she came. She fearlessly answered: "I am a Christian, as are also these my companions; and neither flatteries, promises, menaces, nor the most painful death, will be able to make one of us forsake the faith of Christ." The tyrant, enraged at this answer, ordered all of her companions to be beheaded before her eyes, hoping that this would alter her determination. For the same reason, he had her cast into a dungeon, until the following day, when she was again brought before him. Speaking to her most kindly, he promised to make her the spouse of his own son, if she would obey him, and sacrifice to the gods. Columba replied: "I am already united with Christ, and neither honor, riches, torments, nor death itself, can make me faithless to Him. But thou, O Emperor! shalt not escape eternal torments, if thou dost not repent and worship the only true God." Such freedom of speech roused the tyrant's wrath. He knew that nothing was more painful to Christian virgins than the loss of their chastity; but Columba, having called on God for aid, was protected from all harm. An insolent youth, who had approached her, saw that she was surrounded by a bright light, and had not the courage to touch her, but, running away, he cried aloud: "Truly, the God whom Columba worships is the only true God." When the tyrant was informed of this, he had the chaste virgin scourged, torn with iron combs, and then thrown upon a burning pyre. Finally, when a heavy rain had extinguished the flames, the Christian heroine was beheaded. Her holy body, by command of the Emperor, remained for a long time unburied, but was afterwards interred, with great solemnity, by Count Albertus, whose sight had been restored by touching it. God has wrought many miracles through the intercession of St. Columba. Hence, many churches and convents have been erected in her honor, as at Vienne, in France, where she had been baptized, and at Sens, where she had dwelt. At Cologne, on the Rhine, the principal parish church is named after this holy virgin and martyr. St. Eligius, bishop of Noyon, founded a chapel in her honor, at Paris, wherein her relics reposed in a silver casket, made by order of king Dagobert. The holy bishop Lupus daily visited her shrine, and desired to be buried at the feet of the holy martyr. St. Thomas, Archbishop of Canterbury, when he, as was related yesterday, remained for some time in the monastery of St. Columba, at Sens, passed also daily some time in prayer before her shrine. In so great esteem was the holy virgin and martyr held by these great men.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Anysia and Columba, two holy virgins, are tempted to sin, but both resist courageously and earnestly. They spurn those who would incite them to evil, and remain unharmed. What I have told you several times during the year, I here repeat : learn from these two virgins how you should act when tempted to sin. Think first, how you ought to regard those who tempt you ; they are devils, or tools of the devil. Hence you must treat them as you would treat the devil, were he to appear visibly before you. Would you receive him kindly, or allow him anything that is wrong ? I do not think so. Therefore, act in the same manner towards those who tempt you to sin, because they are devils or tools of the devil. Secondly, both holy virgins never permitted themselves to be touched. In this they acted rightly, and you must follow their example ; for, had they permitted it, they would surely have fallen into greater sin, and at last have been condemned. And this is what you must expect, if you permit what our holy virgins refused. "Whoever allows kissing," says the venerable Bede, "knocks at the door of hell, and will soon fall into it, if he does not quickly draw back." Thirdly, both holy virgins resisted with all their might, and so remained unharmed. You must act in the same manner. You must not show yourself weak, but strong and fearless; you must use all your strength. Spit upon such devils, though they be aristocratic devils ; cry aloud for help and resist with all your force. The Angels honor such fights, and you will gain the respect of the whole world, besides the glory which will be prepared for you in heaven. Both our holy virgins now enjoy the honor of the world ; and how great must be their happiness

in heaven ! Shame and dishonor will be your lot on earth, and eternal torments await you in hell, if you allow a devil in human shape to persuade and overcome you.

II. St. Anysia gave her rich inheritance to the poor, the sick and prisoners, that she might not, by misusing it, fall into vice and thus perish. St. Columba leaves her house and prefers to be poor in a foreign land and obtain heaven in the true faith, than remain at home and go to perdition. Behold the sacrifices the saints made to escape damnation and save their souls. What are you doing ? What have you done during the past year to save your soul ? Do you believe that, living as you have done and as you do, you will escape damnation and go to heaven ? May I not say, with the very best reason, the same words that St. Columba said to the wicked Emperor : "You will not escape the eternal pains, if you do not repent and do penance." Yes, yes, I say to you, without any hesitation, if you will not do penance, change your life, and work with great zeal for your salvation, you will not escape the eternal torments. If you desire to escape them, do penance immediately, and without any delay ; for, who knows whether you will live a year hence, and whether you will have then, as now, an opportunity to work out your salvation. Thousands will not, because death will call them into the other world. May not the same happen to you ? "As we do not know," writes St. Augustine, "when we shall be called away from this world, let us go without delay, from the left to the right. We must neither trust to health nor to youth. Let us begin a better life, while we possess the means to do so."

THIRTY-FIRST DAY OF DECEMBER.

ST. SYLVESTER, POPE, AND ST. MELANIA, THE YOUNGER.

The Roman Martyrology speaks of the holy Pope, St. Sylvester, as follows: "At Rome, the birth-day of the holy Pope, Sylvester, who baptized the Emperor, Constantine the Great, confirmed the general Council of Nice, and who, after having accomplished many other holy works, ended his life peacefully."

St. Sylvester was a Roman, born of Christian parents, and carefully instructed in religion and all necessary knowledge by the priest, Carinus. To the strangers who came to Rome to perform their devotions, he showed all kindness. Tarquinius, the prefect, thought that Sylvester had gained much money in this manner, and calling him into his presence, menaced him with the most cruel tortures, in case he refused to bring him all he had. Sylvester looked at him and said: "This night you will die; how can you, therefore, fulfil your menaces?" And, in truth, Tarquinius was suffocated that night from swallowing a fish-bone; hence Sylvester was released from the prison into which he was cast. After the death of Pope Melchiades, he was unanimously elected to be the head of the Church. This was in the reign of Constantine, who already at that time greatly favored the Christians; but as he was engaged in warfare away from Rome, the pagan officers began again to persecute the faithful. Sylvester, advised by the clergy at Rome, left the city and went to Mount Soracte, where he dwelt in a cave to which all Christians had admittance. There the holy Father offered his tears to heaven, with humble prayers, that the Almighty, for the welfare of Christendom, would end the persecution. His prayer was heard. Constantine the Emperor, became leprous over his whole body, and his physicians and the idolatrous priests advised him to bathe in the blood of infant children. On the following night, in his sleep, there appeared to him two venerable old men, who told him to call the high-priest of the Christians, from Mount Soracte, who would prescribe for him a much more wholesome bath. Sylvester was called, and, being informed of the vision, he showed the Emperor the pictures of the two holy Apostles, Peter and Paul, in which Constantine immediately recognized the two venerable men whom he had seen in his sleep. As the holy Pope informed him farther, that the wholesome bath, of which the Apostles had spoken, was no other than the bath of regeneration, or holy

Baptism, the Emperor showed himself ready to receive it, and having been sufficiently instructed in the faith, he was baptized to the great joy of the Pope and all the faithful. By the advice of the Saint, the Emperor erected many magnificent churches, and ornamented them splendidly, and gave permission to the Christians to build temples to the Lord wherever they desired. In the reign of this Pope, the first General Council was held at Nice, in which the doctrine of Arius was anathematised. The Papal nuncio presided over it, and the Emperor, who liberally paid the travelling expenses of all poor bishops, was present, not as a superior, but only as a protector. He sat the last in rank, and upon a low chair. The esteem in which he held the clergy may be learned from a memorable speech he made there, in which he said: "If I should surprise a priest in an actual sin, I would cover it with my purple, and endeavor to conceal it, from esteem of the priesthood." The decrees of the Council were confirmed by the Pope at Rome, and received by all the faithful. Many other things done by St. Sylvester for the welfare of the Church, are related by the historians of his life. He reigned over the Church 21 years and some months, and died a peaceful and happy death, rejoicing that he was going to the Lord.



We have a bright example of many virtues, especially of chastity, disregard of all things temporal, zeal to labor for the honor of God, and charity to the poor, in St. Melania, called the Younger, to distinguish her from another Melania, who is surnamed the Elder.

Melania, the Younger, was born at Rome, where her parents not only belonged to the first nobility, but were also considered the richest in the city. She admired virginal chastity from her early youth, and desired to remain a virgin; but her parents forced her to marry Pinian, a noble and wealthy youth. She became the mother of two children, the first of whom lived scarcely a year, and the second died soon after it had been baptized. This taught Pinian the vanity of all earthly happiness; and although he had only reached his 24th year, and Melania was but 20, he agreed with her to live in future in perpetual continence, and to employ the large fortune which their children would have inherited, for the honor of God, for the maintenance of the clergy, for the consolation of the poor and for other good works. As soon as they had made this resolution, they chose a dwelling, out of the city, upon one of their estates, and served God and their neighbor unostentatiously. They sold the estates

which they possessed in Rome and other places in Italy, and spent the money to relieve the poor, to build and endow churches and convents, and to maintain priests and religious. After this, they sailed to Sicily and Africa, where they also possessed valuable estates, and after selling them, they intended to continue their charitable and religious undertakings. On one island where they landed, they ransomed many Christian captives from slavery to the infidels. At Tagaste, where St. Alipinus, a friend of St. Augustine, was bishop, they built two convents, one for women, and one for men. Into one Pinian went, and into the other, Melania. Seven years they lived there in the exercises of the most noble virtues. Melania fasted daily until evening, when she partook only of bread and water, or of some herbs seasoned with a little oil. Afterwards she ate only once every two days, then every three days, until finally once every week. All admired so extraordinary a severity, in which nobody was able to follow her. She devoted the whole night to prayer and contemplation, except two hours which she gave to sleep, lying on a straw mattress on the floor. During the day, she also employed many hours in prayer, and the rest in work, which consisted of sewing and mending clothes for the poor, in visiting the sick and needy, in assisting the suffering, and in copying devout books for the welfare of men. After seven years, she had a great desire to go to Jerusalem and visit the holy places. Hence, she travelled with Pinian, her spouse, and Albina, her mother, from Tagaste to Egypt, and arrived in Alexandria, where she was detained by sickness. On her recovery, the holy pilgrims proceeded to Jerusalem. The devotion with which Melania visited the holy places can hardly be told. Every evening she went to the sepulchre of Christ, and remained there until morning. Her love for the Holy Land became such that she resolved to remain there. Hence, she had a little cottage built on Mount Olivet, where she lived for fourteen years a most holy and religious life. Her spouse did the same in a monastery at Jerusalem. The reputation of the holiness of Melania drew many widows and virgins to her, who desired to live under her guidance. To this end, she built a convent and a church at Jerusalem, and received all those who came to her. She would never take upon herself the office of Superior, but waited on the others as though she were a most lowly servant; but she untiringly instructed them, both by word and work, how to serve the Lord. The death of her pious mother, Albina, and of her spouse, Pinian, she bore with perfect submission to the divine will, and thinking that she would soon follow them, she redoubled her zeal in doing good. While all her thoughts were

directed to her great journey into Eternity, she was induced to take another earthly journey. Volusian, her cousin, had been sent from Rome to the court of Constantinople, and becoming very sick there, desired to see Melania, and had written to her to that effect. Melania undertook the wearisome voyage, desiring to convert Volusian, who was still a heathen and addicted to many vices. No sooner, therefore, had she arrived at Constantinople than she hastened to her sick cousin. Seeing her emaciated by fasting and the austerity of her life, he cried, full of surprise: "O dear Melania! how different you look from what you were! How your figure, your whole appearance has changed!" "Learn from it, my dear cousin," said Melania, "what I think of the future life and eternal happiness; for I surely would not have esteemed so lightly all temporal honor, would not have divested myself of all earthly riches, nor have treated my body so severely, had I not surely believed that I should come into the possession of greater honors, riches and joys." These words made a deep impression upon Volusian, and as Melania earnestly exhorted him to become a Christian and do penance, he received holy baptism, and soon after died a peaceful death. Melania, happy at this, was not satisfied with having opened heaven to only one soul. At that period, there were in Constantinople many heretics, who called themselves Nestorians. With these Melania disputed daily for several hours, as she not only spoke the Greek language, but was also well instructed in the Christian faith. Many of the heretics were brought back by her into the pale of the true Church. She gave also many wholesome admonitions to the Emperor Theodosius and his Empress Eudoxia, who had called her to their court.

After this, she returned to the convent at Jerusalem, where God soon revealed to her that her end was approaching, with the comforting assurance that He would reward her with eternal goods, for the temporal goods she had employed in His service. The joy that filled Melania's heart at this revelation, the reader may easily imagine. But she left nothing undone to prepare herself worthily for her last hour. She once again visited the holy places with great devotion, and passed the Christmas in the stable at Bethlehem, where our Lord had been born. Returning to the convent, she became sick, desired to receive the holy Sacraments, and after they had been administered to her, she gave her last instructions to her religious. She was visited by many who lamented her departure. She herself, however, said, with great fortitude: "The Lord's will be done!" After these words, she gave her soul, ornamented with so many extraordinary virtues, into the hands of her Creator, on the last day of

December, in the year 438, according to Baronius and several others. Her tomb was glorified with many miracles, and her holy life became known all over the Christian world.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Both St. Sylvester and St. Melania passed their whole lives in the service of the Lord. They were careful to avoid sin ; unwearied in the practice of good works ; patient in persecutions, trials and crosses. How greatly this must have consoled them in their last hour ! How happy both must now be in heaven !

To-day ends the year. If it also proved the end of your life, would you be as happy as these two Saints ? Would you have well-founded hopes to participate in the joys of heaven ? Consider how you have passed this year, and all the preceding ones, and you will be enabled to answer the foregoing question. You have had, in this year, 12 months, or 52 weeks, which are 365 days or 8760 hours ! How have you passed these ? Can you say truthfully, that you have employed the 20th part of them to the end for which they were given you by the Almighty ? How have you employed so many opportunities to do good, which you had ? Have you been careful in avoiding sin ? Have you practised good works ? Have you borne, with Christian patience, all that God has laid upon you ? Have you, in one word, been diligent and unwearied in the service of God and in working out your salvation ? If you were able to answer all these questions affirmatively, I could assure you that you have well-founded hopes of eternal salvation, should you die to-day ; but on the contrary, anxiety and fear must befall you, if you are obliged to say, with the wicked man : " I have had empty months."

(Job, vii.) Empty in good works, empty in merits, but full of indolence, full of sin, full of vice, or, as the sinner said on his death-bed : " But now I remember the evils that I did." (1. Macc. vi.) I have done much evil, but little good, and the little good I have done, was done without earnestness, without zeal. Oh ! such confessions can give to a dying person no consolation, no satisfaction, but only extreme anxiety, and may even bring him to despair. To have served the Lord zealously to have labored earnestly for the salvation of our soul, to have avoided sin, or sincerely repented of it when committed ; and to have constantly practised good works, this will give consolation and satisfaction to us in our dying hour, and hope to enter heaven. Endeavor so to conduct yourself during the following year, that you may have this consolation and hope, when you are dying.

II. St. Sylvester and St. Melania received many special graces from heaven, and used them to the honor of God, the salvation of their own souls, and that of others. Can you complain that you have not received, above thousands of others, especial graces from God ? Certainly not. But God can complain of you that you have not employed them to your salvation. Let your thoughts go back only over this one year which ends to-day. Can you count the benefits which God has bestowed on your soul and body, in preference to many thousands, although you have not deserved them ? And if He had done nothing but preserved your life until this

hour, that you might not die in your sins ; if He had given you nothing but so much time for penance and so many opportunities to work out your salvation, He would have shown Himself much more merciful and gracious towards you than towards thousands of others, whom He has called, in this year, laden with sin, into the other world. How have you conducted yourself towards God ? What use have you made of His graces and mercies ? How have you manifested your thankfulness ? Is it possible that you can think of it without fear, without shame ? Ah ! your constant indolence in the service of the Almighty, and more than that, the many and not small sins you have committed, are no signs of gratefulness, but of great wickedness.

Employ at least this day in hum-

ble gratitude for the many benefits which you have received during the year, and in deep contrition for your ingratitude and wickedness. Give due thanks to the Almighty for all His graces and benefits. Repent, with your whole heart, and, if possible, with tears of blood, of your many sins. As thanksgiving for so many graces, as atonement for so many sins, offer to the Lord all that which has been done by others to His honor during the year, but above all offer Him a contrite and humble heart, which, on this day, resolves to serve Him in future with zeal and constancy. Recite, in thanksgiving, the Ambrosian hymn of praise : " We praise thee, O God, &c.," and in atonement for your sins, the 50th psalm, " Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy great mercy, &c."

TO THE CHRISTIAN READER.

I do not doubt, Christian Reader, that you, who have read these volumes, day by day, are one of those who honor and invoke the Saints that reign with Christ in heaven. You act rightly ; for, the Lord Himself honors His Saints as His faithful servants and friends ; why should it be wrong for you to honor them ? God bestows on us many benefits by the mediation of His Saints ; why should you not invoke their intercession ? But recall to mind what I have more than once told you : there is no better way to honor the Saints, none more agreeable to them and to God, none more beneficial to yourself, none that is more powerful to obtain their intercession, than to imitate them in virtue. " The most noble honor bestowed upon a martyr is to imitate the martyr," says St. Chrysostom. " Do not depart from the way in which the Saints walked, that you may obtain their intercession," admonishes St. Bernard ; " for they must see something of their virtues in us, that they may deign to pray for us to God," says St. Augustine. This imitation is the surest way to enjoy the society of the Saints, as St. Augustine says in the following words : " If we wish to enjoy the society of the Saints in

heaven, we must now imitate them on earth." And this was the principal reason why these volumes were written: to incite you to imitate the Saints. You will find in them many bright examples of virtue for every station in life, and for every age, that you may see how the Saints arrived at salvation, and may learn what you must do to save your soul. You were created for the same salvation which the Saints already enjoy in heaven. God gives you also means and graces to obtain it. But be assured that you will not attain it, if you do not endeavor to imitate the virtues of the Saints. You cannot imitate all the Saints in all their actions; as, for instance, in leaving the world and all temporal goods, or in bearing the most cruel torments for the sake of the true faith; but you can imitate them in other virtues necessary to salvation, as, faith, hope, love to God and man; in avoiding sin; in doing penance, in the practice of good works; in patience under crosses and trials. Hence, I beseech you, reflect earnestly on the examples of virtues you have this year read in these Lives, and, if you value your salvation, endeavor to imitate the Saints. This is the way to enter into the society of the Saints, the way to eternal salvation.

PRAYER TO ALL THE SAINTS OF GOD.

O, ye happy inhabitants of heaven! Ye beloved Saints of God! by your powerful intercession with God, obtain for him, who has represented your life and death as an example to others, and shown that the way to salvation is reached only by imitating your virtues, the grace, that he too may walk in the path of holiness, and be united to you in heaven! O, all ye Saints of God, pray for him! Pray for him while he lives! Pray for him at the hour of his death! that he may, with you, and with the souls of those who will have been benefited by this book, praise God in heaven for evermore! Amen!

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